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Volume I, Issue I, Special Edition Produced for Personnel of KFOR7 Multi-National Task Force (East) December 2006

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Staff Sgt. Andres Oviedo, Task Force Talon, Lansing, Mich., listens to remarks from Brig. Gen. Darren Owens, commanding general, Multi-National Task Force (East) during the final deployment ceremony Nov. 11 on Camp Bondsteel's Victory Field. KFOR7 is rotating out of Kosovo after a year long deployment as KFOR8. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Brandon Krahmer, Layout & Design by Sgt. Matthew Chlosta)

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Guardian Special Edition:

End of a Journey

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This section of the Guardian Special Edition: End of a Journey tells the story of KFOR7's entire 18 month training and deployment. We did it by including some new material, plus other original stories and layouts remixed and redesigned. We've drawn material from the 10 Guardian magazines produced at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo from January 2006 - November 2006, the KFOR7 MRX magazine published in December 2005 at Hohenfels, Germany and the three KFOR7 CPX online magazines from July - November, 2005 at Fort Hood, Texas. All material is produced and published by the 4th PAD. Thank you for reading the Guardian.

-Sgt.(P) Matthew Chlosta -editor-



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters 36th Infantry Division (Forward)
Task Force Falcon
Camp Bondsteel – KFOR 7
APO AE 09340

Dear Soldiers of MNTF(E)'s KFOR-7,

It has been a long and exciting eighteen months during our KFOR-7 rotation. As everything winds down and we begin to travel back home and reunite with our families, I want you to reflect back and realize how many things we've accomplished during this deployment. We've brought a group of people together who've seen they can be part of something bigger than themselves. They've made a difference everyday. We've been able to blend together a seamless Multi-National Task Force with not only U.S. Soldiers from the Army National Guard, Army Reserve and Regular Army, but the Air Force and our MNTF(E) partners from Poland, the Ukraine, Greece, Lithuania, Romania, and Armenia. This job is important to our future, our children's future and our grandchildren's future. Our success is reflected not only in the work we've done, but also in how well we've prepared those who follow us.

Our unit is extremely blessed in the quality of the people that we have. You have touched individuals in a way that will stay with them for the rest of their lives. You will never know all the difference you've made and the impact of your work here that will carry on. The quality and professionalism shown by the Soldiers of our Task Force and what they've done here shows me the future of our country is in good hands. I appreciate each and every one of you. You are leaving Kosovo a safe and secure environment for their government institutions to mature in. You picked up the challenge; you did the work and a lot of heavy lifting. Your impact will be felt for generations to come throughout Kosovo, the United States and the world. Thank you for all of your time and sacrifices. I am proud of each and every one of you and I am honored to have served along side you during KFOR-7. Continue your journey throughout your post Kosovo life with the knowledge that you have been part of a significant moment in time during the long and rich history of the Balkans. You have honored the cause of Freedom.

"Lone Star."

BG Darren G. Owens
Commanding General
Multi-National Task Force (East)



Brig. Gen. Darren Owens
Commanding General
Multi-National Task Force (East)



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters 36th Infantry Division (Forward)
Task Force Falcon
Camp Bondsteel – KFOR 7
APO AE 09340




KFOR7 Soldiers,

As we move closer to the redeployment phase, the final phase of our mission, I'm sure we are all experiencing some of the same feelings- relief, stress, excitement, anxiety, happiness, and in some cases, a little sadness. In spite of all the trauma of being deployed, this has been our "home away from home" for the last year. We have all developed a particular "comfort zone" as well as forming some close relationships along the way. As I talked to one Soldier about redeployment he said "I'm happy to go home but at the same time in the back of my mind I'm a little sad to see this all end." We probably all feel that way to a certain extent. I would just like to say to all the Soldiers of KFOR 7, in spite of all the trials, tribulations, stress and anguish, this deployment has been the high point of my military career. The opportunity to work with such a great group of Soldiers and have such a successful rotation has exceeded all my expectations. Our Task Force has set the standard in every aspect of this mission. We have trained more Soldiers, conducted more missions, patrols, ranges, flight hours, civic projects etc., etc. The list of outstanding accomplishments goes on and on. At the same time we have reduced the number of vehicular accidents, negligent discharges, and disciplinary actions from previous rotations. It hasn't been easy. As a matter of fact, in some cases, it has been very hard. From the late night patrols, to pulling vehicle maintenance in the rain, to twelve hour shifts in the towers at FOB Monteith, the Soldiers of this Task Force have definitely earned their pay. Our primary mission was to maintain a safe and secure environment for the people of Kosovo. Regardless of what the future holds for Kosovo if the issue ever arises about violence in Kosovo, you can proudly say "Not on my watch!"

As we prepare to head back to home and family I want to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you. You are true professionals. You have fulfilled the expectations of the American people and you have accomplished your mission in grand style. Some of us will continue to serve together in our home units while others will never meet again. For the former, I'm looking forward to working with you again, for the latter- Good luck and Godspeed.

Soldier On!


CSM Kenneth N. Boyer
CSM, Multi-National Task Force (East)
US ARMY



Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Boyer
Command Sergeant Major
Multi-National Task Force (East)

Right, Spc. Javier Courrech, Task Force Alamo, 36th Infantry Division says goodbye to his wife Leticia Courrech, after his unit's Kosovo/Bosnia deployment ceremony, Nov. 25 in Waco, Texas.

Article, Photo, Layout & Design by Sgt. Matthew Chlosta

WACO, Texas—A day after Thanksgiving and 30 days before Christmas, more than 1,500 Soldiers, bound for a 14-month deployment to Kosovo and Bosnia, were honored in a ceremony Nov. 25 at Baylor University's Ferrell Center.

A circular sea of green seats was filled by excited and emotional family members and friends inside the indoor arena.

They were there to say goodbye to their Soldiers one last time before they departed for the Balkans for a one year deployment in support of Operation Joint Guardian.

The day marked the first time 36th Infantry Division Soldiers have deployed to Europe since World War II.

During the ceremony, guest speaker, Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, said, "I am so proud to be here today. I know that Task Force Falcon will be a great success."

Hutchison told the crowd she felt bonded to the Texas Guard.

She told an anecdote about a previous trip she took to Bosnia in the year 2000 to visit Texas National Guard troops with Maj. Gen. Michael Taylor, commanding general, 36th Inf. Div., who was also in attendance and spoke to the troops.

"Your mission is so important," Hutchison said. "You will be showing the people in Bosnia, the people of Kosovo (and) the people of the world, what American Soldiers are. Many people from other countries hear about the work that American troops do around the world. But, you will be showing what America is."

It is very important what you're doing, keeping the peace in Kosovo, she said.

"We will never be able to fight and win the hearts and minds of the people of the world unless we have boots on the ground and that is why our Army and our Guard is so important," Hutchison said. "There is only one way to secure the peace. You do it with boots on the ground. You spread freedom with boots on the ground."

The Soldiers have been training at North Fort Hood, Texas since July 11 to take part in NATO's peace-keeping operations in Eastern Europe.

Hutchison thanked the Soldiers for their sacrifice as they will be leaving their families for over a year.

"You are so important to our country," Hutchison said. "By spreading freedom to others, you are making our freedom more secure. Thank you for being willing to serve our country. We can do no less than stand for freedom. You are the face of America. We thank you."

After the singing of the Army song and the colors were retired the Soldiers spilled out onto the grassy hills that surrounded the venue.

There, they said their final goodbyes to their friends, families and loved ones

"It's a good chance for the family to see their Soldier off," Sgt. Darren Warren, Task Force Dragoon, 36th Inf. Div., said, before the ceremony. "I think it's a good thing giving those people a chance at freedom if their given that right to be established as a country. My family has been very supportive. They're glad I'm going there instead of other hotspots."



As the white "Bluebird" busses stood at the ready to whisk the Soldiers away, there were many final hugs and tears.

There were dads, wives, sons, daughters, friends and relatives.

They all seemed to not want to let go.

"It's hard," Lauren Saldana, 12, said about watching her father, Sgt. Hector Saldana, TF Alamo, leave for deployment.

Saldana's pregnant wife and Lauren's mother Debbie Saldana choked back tears as she echoed her daughter's sentiments.

She said, "It's hard for him and for us. We're very proud of him. (I'll) miss his help at home (the most). He's a wonderful dad."

Saladana's baby is due Jan. 26. He'll miss the birth during his deployment.

Editor's note: Most of the deploying Soldiers are part of the Texas National Guard's 36th Inf. Div. They are joined by Soldiers from Puerto Rico and the states of Arkansas, Alabama, California, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. The majority of the Soldiers has been training together as Task Force Falcon and will be headed to Kosovo. Once overseas, TF Falcon will be joined by a battalion of Soldiers from Greece and a battalion of Polish, Ukrainian and Lithuanian Soldiers. This combined force will be known as Multi-National Brigade(East). MNB(E) will be commanded by Brig. Gen. Darren Owens, 36th Inf. Div., Texas National Guard. The other part of the Balkans mission includes the 150 Soldiers of Task Force Strike bound for Bosnia.

NEW YEAR'S NEW YEAR'S

Task Force Houston
Soldiers patrol
Kamenica/Kamenice
on New Year's Eve

Story, Photos, Layout & Design by Sgt. Matthew Chlosta

Dec. 31.



A couple walks past teenagers celebrating the New Year and dancing in front of a small fire near "Serb Alley" around 1:30 a.m., on Jan. 1 in Kamenica/Kamenice, Kosovo. Soldiers from 1st Platoon, Company A, Task Force Houston, 36th Infantry Division, Texas National Guard, Multi-National Brigade (East) conducted foot patrols during the night and early morning to provide a safe and secure environment for locals to celebrate the New Year.

No Cover

It was cold enough to see your breath. Dirty snow flecked with gravel slowly melted on the dull gray sidewalk as they walked. The music thumped louder and louder as the six young adults approached the front door of the discothèque, "Dark Way." With a friendly nod of acknowledgement, they slipped past the large, beefy bouncer, who was dressed in a tight black T-shirt and blue jeans.

Inside, smoke and sweaty bodies swallowed them up. The ear splitting music rattled their brains. They used arm and hand signals to quietly work their way through the crowd.

The group stuck close together as they made their way up the steps to the balcony area that wrapped around the perimeter of the packed dance floor.

Once upstairs, they stopped and looked out over the crush of pulsating bodies.

They positioned themselves so they could observe the energized partygoers from their over watch position. A few snapped digital photos of the crowd.

They were all about the same age as the New Year's Eve revelers, who were having the time of their life, drinking, smoking, chatting and dancing the night away, down below.

But these young men and one woman weren't club hopping.

They were, "Argonauts," Soldiers from 1st Platoon, Company A, Task Force Houston, 36th Infantry Division, Texas National Guard.

Even though they weren't able to join in the festivities, they were still enjoying their own unique New Year's Eve experience.

The "Argonauts" were conducting one of several New Year's Eve foot patrols in and around the town of Kamenica/Kamenice.

"The disco was my favorite part of the patrol," Spc. Anna Herrera, medic, 1st Plt., Co. A, TF Houston, 36th Inf. Div., said. "I got to see some of the European style and hear some European music, it was fun."

Less than 10 days into a one-year-deployment, the KFOR 7 Soldiers were here to learn about their area of responsibility from their counterparts, the 40th Infantry Division, California National Guard, KFOR 6B, Soldiers known as the "Peacemakers."

"Going to the disco club--made me think of how things seem the same as back in the states," Herrera said, "and then I started to think

KFOR7 training draws one step closer to the real thing in Germany

Dec. 5, 2005

Story by Spc. J. Tashun Joycé, Photo + Layout & Design by Sgt. Matthew Chlosta

In the final phase of preparation before embarking on a one-year deployment to Kosovo and Bosnia motivated Soldiers from the 36th Infantry Division, Texas Army National Guard took a brief pit stop in Hohenfels, Germany. By no means was the 36th's visit to the Army's second largest training area in Europe, the Hohenfels Joint Multinational Readiness Center formerly the Combat Maneuver Training Center intended for fun and games. Since the activation of the 36th Inf. Div. on July 11, Soldiers have endured rigorous training in order to gear up for the task ahead of them - taking the lead role in the control of operations that support the United Nations Mission in Kosovo as the head of the Multi-National Brigade (East).

In order to get ready for this mission Soldiers had to become familiar with the politics of the region, its culture and history as well as challenges they may face while in theater.

"The 36th ID is here to participate in a mission readiness exercise to validate our ability to control MNB (E) as part of the KFOR mission," Col. William Smith, deputy commander for maneuver KFOR 7 MNB (E), said. "The KFOR mission is a United Nations sanctioned operative under the auspice of UN Security Council Regulation 1244 which authorizes a military response to stop ethnic intolerance in Kosovo."

It is always important to ensure that the troops are ready for an operation before the actual operation, Smith said. Hohenfels is an outstanding training facility and is similar to KFOR in temperature and terrain creating an atmosphere unavailable in Texas, Smith added.

With daily temperatures in the area near or below freezing and snow, the training gave Soldiers who are familiar with a much warmer climate a glimpse of the future.

Since the JMRC handles training for a variety of real world missions including Iraq and Afghanistan training is constantly modified to fit each specific mission making the experiences of each rotation a little different from the rotations before.

Training for the 36th consisted largely of interacting with the local population, civilian peacekeepers and peace sustaining operations stuffed within a 20 day time period. Soldiers encountered a number of scenarios including vehicle checks, route reconnaissance, security patrols, and reacting to a hostile crowd of unarmed civilians.

Troops were evaluated by a cadre of highly trained and experienced individuals called observer controllers (OCs), Smith said. OC teams are present throughout the exercise to assist in training and to help improve any noted deficiency.

"The main role of an OC is to coach, teach, and mentor," Sgt. First Class Fernando Mateo, OC, Team Mustang, said. "Our main goal is to prepare any unit that comes here to train for wherever they are going."

OC teams do everything by the book, Mateo said. Each OC has his own specialty and at least 15 years of military experience.

OC teams also attempt to recreate the environment that troops will encounter by adding scenery common to the area the troops are going. Small villages were built to resemble small communities found in Kosovo and caves have been constructed for troops headed to Afghanistan.

Hohenfels' training sites Camp Albershof and Tent City which housed the 36th during their visit were even temporarily renamed Camp Bondsteel and Camp Montieth after the two base camps the 36th will occupy upon arriving in Kosovo.

"This training is very realistic," said Smith. "The installation has done an outstanding job of replicating the Kosovo environment by bringing in a large number of local nationals and civilians."

"We do our best get the Soldiers ready for what they will face," Mateo said.

The 36th is ready for the mission ahead and our execution of this training culminates that, Smith said. "I'm very proud of our troops for enduring a lot of tough training and performing exceedingly well against adversity. They have continued to amaze me. We are proud to be going to Kosovo to ensure stability in everyone's life and their ability to pursue freedom and relative happiness."



Left, Spc. Branden Czarnecki, fuel handler, Task Force Talon, gets advice from Sgt. 1st Class Mark Williams, observer controller, Joint Multi-National Training Command, 7th Army during 36th Infantry Division's MRX, Dec. 5 at Camp Albershof Airfield, Hohenfels, Germany.

of how it must have been before the UN (United Nations) stepped in, how it seemed like a safer environment for the youth of Kosovo, that they felt at ease to celebrate and bring in a New Year.

"Happy New Year" inside the wire

Initially, the patrol was supposed to leave Camp Monteith by 11 p.m. But, because of a faulty radio, they were delayed for more than an hour. So they spent midnight waiting in the staging area for another Humvee to be brought around. They milled around their Humvees in the bone chilling cold. They poured over maps illuminated by flash lights and laid out on the hood of another Humvee. At 11:53 p.m. Staff Sgt. Manuel Lopez, squad leader, 1st Sqd., 3rd Plt., Co. A, TF Houston, 36th Inf. Div., finished his brief to the Soldiers. He talked about the different areas they would patrol over the next 6 hours. For most of the Soldiers on the foot patrols, this year was a lot different than how they spent last New Year's Eve.

"(I) saw a concert (on) 6th Street in Austin, (Texas) and enjoyed the company of my friends," 2nd Lt. Luke Talbot, platoon leader, 1st Plt., Co. A, TF Houston said, when he described how he spent last New Year's Eve. This year was definitely different, he added. "I'm used to being one of the troublemakers, not stopping them," Talbot said, "although with the ethnic tensions here, they have a different idea of 'trouble.'"

"I enjoyed the change of pace, (and) it validates why I am on the mission and why I am in the Army, to help out where I can, and to serve my fellow man, by providing them with a measure of security," he said.

As the clock struck midnight, the Soldiers listened as celebratory fire shot off in the distance and fireworks screamed across the night sky.

"Last New Year's Eve I spent with my family and my son in Laredo, Mexico eating traditional Mexican food and bringing in the New Year with a toast and some fireworks," Herrera said.

"This year it just feels like another day, another day closer to home. It was uniquely different in a good way."

Foot Patrol

"I'm hoping we get to walk around," Herrera said, as, finally, her Humvee pulled out of the Camp Montieth gate in the city of Gnjilane/Gjilan slightly after midnight. The "Argonauts" did patrols in several towns in their new AOR on New Year's Eve. But, their focus was on Kamenica/Kamenice. About an hour later their Humvees slowly crawled through Kamenica/Kamenice's central town square called, "D-Market." The place was choked with happy couples, young adults and kids running



Above, Staff Sgt. Manuel Lopez, squad leader, 1st Squad, 3rd Platoon, Company A, Task Force Houston, center, finishes his brief at 11:53 p.m. on Camp Monteith, Kosovo to the Soldiers about to go on patrol in Kamenica/Kamenice. Below, Staff Sgt. Victor Alcocer, 1st Squad, 1st Platoon, Company A, Task Force Houston, 36th Infantry Division, Texas National Guard, KFOR 7, looks at the wall dividing "Serb Alley" from the rest of Kamenica/Kamenice, Kosovo at 2:30 a.m. on Jan. 1 during a foot patrol. "We encourage, when we go out on the patrols, Alcocer said. "We get feedback from them." The wall was removed this fall by MNTF(E).



"I was kind of excited to be going out," Herrera said. "I didn't really know what to expect. All in all it was a great experience."

"Serb Alley"

After about 20 minutes taking in the sights and sounds of the partygoers, the Soldiers departed the "Dark Way" nightclub.

Next, the patrol walked around a small set of store fronts, towards the other side of town, and the darkened, "Serb Alley."

The patrol passed a side street where teenagers danced and talked in front of a small flickering fire built to keep them warm. Couples walked past randomly. Most were snuggled close to escape the frigid wind constantly whipping down from the snow covered hills that surrounded the town. "Serb Alley," had single and double story houses that sloped toward the crooked street. A lane for automobile traffic runs through the center of the enclave. Cars have to drive around a reminder of the past, a concrete road barrier that used to symbolically separate "Serb Alley," from the rest of the predominantly Albanian neighborhood. Unlike today in Kamenica/Kamenice, Serbians and Albanians were divided back then simply by which side of the street you lived on.

According to some of the Soldiers, the wall, which was covered with graffiti, could possibly be removed during their KFOR-7 rotation. The patrol continued on. A few minutes later, they looked up to spot a single pair of sneakers draped over a telephone wire. Tonight, we're just observing, Staff Sgt. Victor Alcocer, 1st Sqd., 1st Plt, Co. A, TF Houston, said. "(We) see how the infrastructure is doing, how the people are doing, if the people have confidence in their own municipality, own infrastructure.

"We encourage, when we go out on the patrols, Alcocer said. "We get feedback from them."

The patrol circled back from the alley, past a "former Special Forces" safe house.

Feedback

"Bringing in the New Year here on deployment was more than I expected, she said, "I thought I would just be sitting on - duty, on the phone with my family. What surprised me was how familiar Kosovo felt. That will most likely not be my last patrol." Talbot speculated that the false UXO report was called in to ruin the party.

"The false UXO report was the most significant for me; it required that one of my platoon's squads be redeployed from their mission to secure the site," Talbot said. "The squad responded well."

Finished

The Soldiers and interpreter made a left turn towards the center of town as they passed next to the new Kosovo Police Service building.

By 3 a.m. they were done. Their tan boots scraped across the damp pavement. They crossed the main road, and walked past the now nearly deserted "D-Market" plaza. They were on their way back to the welcoming warmth of the heated, patrol tent. The patrol hurried around a bunch of rusty dumpsters that overflowed with smelly, holiday trash.

They moved through the dark silently, as the soft, orange-sherbet street lights and the town's low noise faded behind. The group took another left turn behind a grimy, white three-story building. They navigated the muddy road and water filled potholes, as they retraced their steps. They were illuminated only by their flashlights that bobbed in the night like fireflies.



Spc. Anna Herrera, medic, 1st Platoon, Company A, Task Force Houston, 36th Infantry Division, Texas National Guard, takes pictures of the crowd on the dance floor inside the "Dark Way" discotheque on Jan. 1 in the town of Kamenica/Kamenice, Kosovo, as Spc. Ronny Pigg, 1st Plt. Co. A, TF Houston, 36th Inf. Div., watches the crowd of celebrants.

Jan. 1.

The disco was my favorite part of the patrol. I got to see some of the European style and hear some European music, it was fun. Spc. Anna Herrera, 1st Plt., Co. A, TF Houston

around lighting off firecrackers to celebrate the New Year. According to the "Argonauts," Kamenica/Kamenice is one of the shining examples of how the municipalities are supposed to be working to meet the standards for Kosovo's future status. The patrols, mounted and dismounted, are designed around the presence of KFOR Soldiers, who help provide a safe and secure environment for the local citizens as Kosovo moves closer to their UN negotiated future status scheduled for this year.

"The late night dismount patrol was good, we swept the area to make sure no revelers were too exuberant in their celebration," Talbot said, a few days afterward.

"Company wide, I believe that the patrols did a good job of establishing that we will not tolerate any violence. There were very small instances of violations, such as celebratory fire and a false UXO (unexploded ordnance) report from a civilian, but all in all, our mere presence was sufficient to keep people from violence."

Paldenice/Palivodenica locals enjoy sweets, treats & checkups with POL/UKR Battalion

Story, Photos, Layout & Design by Sgt. Matthew Chlosta

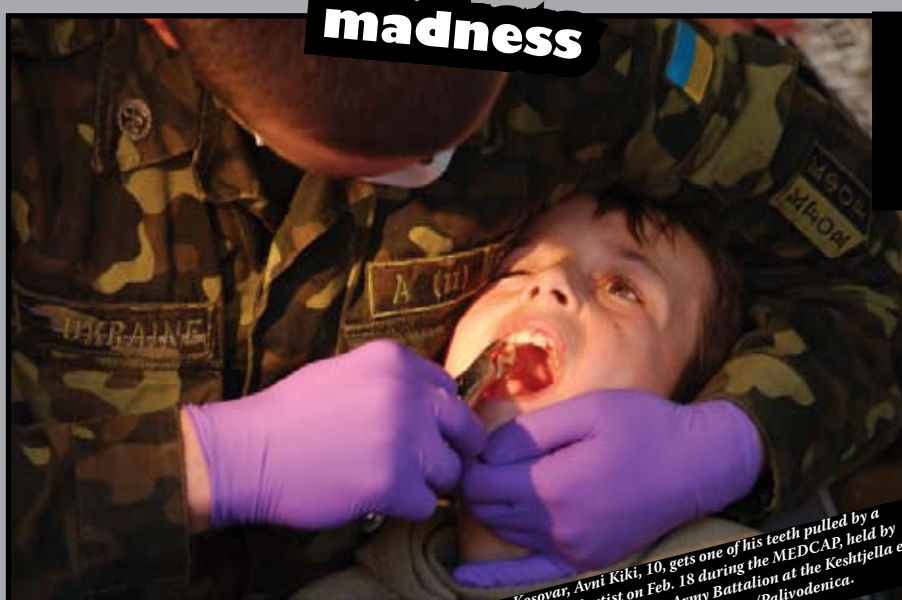
There was no screaming, no crying, but there was some pain and a little bit of blood. It was a Saturday, and even though school wasn't in session, all of the classrooms were full.

The halls of the Keshtjella e Diturise School overflowed with children, teenagers and adults.

The schoolhouse sits on the side of a muddy hill in a valley surrounded by mountains to the north and the border of the Former Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia loomed over the ridge to the south.

Task Force Polish/Ukraine Battalion in conjunction with TF MedFalcon held a medical civil assistance program at the school on Feb. 16 to bring medicine and treatment to the local Kosovar population in the tiny village of Paldenice/Palivodenica and its surrounding areas.

Kosovar 3rd grader, Sami Curri, 8, proudly displays the coloring book he received at his school Keshtjella e Diturise from American Soldiers during the Polish/Ukrainian Army Battalion MEDCAP on Feb. 18 in the village of Paldenice/Palivodenica.



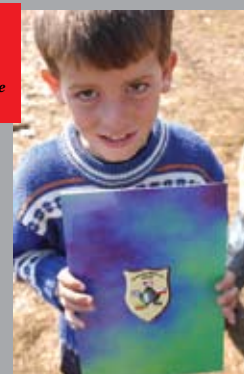
A young Kosovar, Avni Kiki, 10, gets one of his teeth pulled by a Ukrainian Army dentist on Feb. 18 during the MEDCAP, held by the Task Force Polish/Ukraine Army Battalion at the Keshtjella e Diturise School, in the village of Paldenice/Palivodenica.



In the medical clinic's exam room, Maj. Stuart Feldman, chief, Emergency Medicine & Trauma, TF MedFalcon, has an interpreter help him give his diagnosis to his patient, an older Kosovar man, during the Task Force Polish/Ukrainian Army Battalion MEDCAP on Feb. 18, at the Keshtjella e Diturise school in Paldenice/Palivodenica.



Above, and left, Army Reservist Maj. Brian Montgomery, optometrist, Task Force MedFalcon, 18th Field Hospital, Fort Story, Va., examines two older gentleman for cataracts and eye disease on Feb. 18.



Mar. 5.

CORDON

TF Alamo & TF POL/UKR BAT.
drop in on Dimce/Dimce

Story, Photos, Layout & Design
by Sgt. Matthew Chlosta



Spc. Michael Arenal, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force Alamo pulls security outside a searched house during a joint cordon and search operation with TF POL/UKR BAT. in Dimce/Dimce on March 5.



Above, right, photo, Spc. Johnnie Gonzales, 1st Platoon, Company B, Task Force Alamo, watches the perimeter as the house behind him is searched.

Above, left, photo, Staff Sgt. Andres Perez, 1st Plt., Co. B, TF Alamo examines a 12-gauge shotgun found in one of the houses searched during a joint cordon and search operation with the Polish/Ukrainian Army Battalion on March 5 in the tiny FYROM border village of Dimce/Dimce. story. The owner of the gun was not home, but his brother was. The man also has a permit for the weapon, but it was expired. So the TF Alamo Soldiers left the weapon in the house and called KPS.

Search

Then the Soldiers began the search process.

"We found a shotgun and a computer," Blew said. "He's allowed to have it (the shotgun) if he has papers."

Staff Sgt. Andres Perez, 1st Plt., Co. B, TF Alamo took several photos of the serial number to see if it matched or was related to any criminal history. TF POL/UKR BAT., also found a 12-gauge shotgun with an expired permit. The man said it was his brother's gun, but he kept it for him so his brother's kids didn't play with the weapon. Unfortunately, the man had an expired permit.

So, the Soldiers confiscated the weapon. They also made sketches of the houses and compounds if future searches are necessary. Later the confiscated shotgun was returned to the family and the Kosovo Police Service was notified about the expired permit.

"We support the local municipality and the KPS as a professional organization in protecting locals from lawbreakers," Olivo said. The operation was a show of joint interoperability, he added. TF Alamo Soldiers searched the house and barn, while the POL/UKR BAT. Soldiers searched four houses and one barn/hay loft. Meanwhile, Spc. Roy Barker, operations, TF Falcon, swept through the house and around the grounds with a metal detector.

The search team also looked through files, dressers, under pots and checked for false walls. Soldiers found suspicious passport photos, financial records and some computer equipment.

Any place, any time

As the operation came to a close, the family was allowed back in the house and Soldiers from TF Viper did some tactical questioning. Tactical questioning is different than interrogation said a Captain from TF Viper, who asked that his name not be used.

"Everything has gone well so far," Capt. Sean Ibarguen, company commander, Co. B, TF Alamo, said. "(The) purpose of this mission is to let people know we are flexible and (can drop in on) people anywhere, any time."

"I cannot think of any improves. I've never seen any thing like this coordination (and) I've been in eight years," Blew said. "These Soldiers executed (the mission flawlessly). We want to send a message that we're KFOR. We're here to help people."

As Apache helicopters hovered overhead, Multi-National Brigade (East) Soldiers searched two compounds looking for smuggled goods, weapons and contraband 700 meters from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia border in joint operation "Speakeasy" on Mar. 5.

The first cordon & search mission of the current MNB(E) Kosovo Force 7 rotation was conducted by members of Company B, Task Force Alamo, 36th Infantry Division, Texas National Guard and Task Force Polish/Ukrainian Battalion in the tiny hillside village of Dimce/Dimce.

"For an operation this size it went very well," 2nd Lt. Michael Blew, platoon leader, 1st Platoon, Company B, Task Force Alamo, said.

Besides the helicopters, there were 48 military vehicles involved in the operation Maj. Jaime Olivo, commander, Task Force Alamo, said.

"It was very successful," Olivo said. "We were able to achieve our objective; let them know KFOR is here. Violation of the law within (MNB(E)) will not be tolerated."

Cordon

The cordon platoons were flown in on two Blackhawk helicopters at precisely 9 a.m., and dropped off on the lush, green farmland behind one of the houses. The inner cordon was set up by Soldiers from 2nd Plt., Co. B, while 3rd Plt., Co. B, TF Alamo covered the outer cordon nearby for 'blocking missions.' These were set up in case anyone tried to make a run for the border.

"From our objective it is going well," Spc. Wayne Suttle, 3rd Plt., Co. B, TF Alamo, said. "We do more concentration on the inner (cordon)." He added that this was his first cordon and search operation.

"I'm a little bit nervous when they say they've shot at them before. They're looking for a certain gentleman on the black list, weapons (and) contraband," Suttle said.

Clear

Minutes later, Humvees from 1st Plt., Co. B, TF Alamo rushed forward from their hiding spot on the side of another mountain lower in the valley. They zoomed up the narrow alleyways to enter the cordoned area.

TF Alamo went into one family's compound high on the mountainside near the border of FYROM, while the POL/UKR BAT., split off to investigate another family complex, about 2 kilometers away.

"It was perfect coordination -- between aerial assets and ground assets," Blew said.

Both groups were also looking for a suspected arms trafficker/smuggler.

The man TF Alamo Soldiers were looking for wasn't there but several extended family members, including some of his brothers, were in the house. Blew said that when they got to the house most of the family was already outside to see why helicopters were landing in their backyard. Before going into the house, all the Soldiers put on sky-blue-colored footies to cover the bottom of their boots.

"We don't want to dirty up the house. We want to be respectful," Blew said.

Once TF Alamo's 1st Plt. cleared the house, the Soldiers put orange vests in front of rooms they had already checked and fluorescent orange markers on four sides of the house and barn. The markers were hung up as an all-clear signal to the helicopters circling overhead. Next, the military working dogs were sent in to sniff for narcotics and explosives.

Story, Photos by Spc. Daniel J. Nichols
Remix Layout & Design by Sgt. Matthew Chlosta



EOD TRAINS UP KPS

March 17, a conference room at the Kosovo Police Service headquarters in Ferizaj/Urosevac filled up with KPS personnel to take a class given by Task Force Falcon's Explosive Ordnance Disposal.

The class is given to basic police officers on identifying and reporting Improvised Explosive Devices and Unexploded Ordnance, Staff Sgt. Michael Lindenberg, EOD, TF Falcon, EOD, said. "It's basically a requirement for the entire KPS force to remain police officers," he said.

"The training is very welcomed by the police officers here," Sgt. Iliz Gashi, training noncommissioned officer, Ferizaj/Urosevac KPS, said. "The police officers here have shown a lot of interest in this training class and they all want to go," Gashi said.

Each time a familiar **explosive** device found in Kosovo was shown, a murmur of recognition would arise from the KPS students.

"Our training of the KPS," Sgt. First Class Stewart Houston, NCOIC, EOD, TF Falcon, said, "directly effects their ability to react to incidents involving UXOs in a timely manner, and will further enable them to mitigate the hazards of a UXO."

Different EOD teams give the class on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. "Every EOD soldier across the Army participates in giving this kind of training, everyone from E-4 to E-8 and even our commander," said Houston.

Friday's group of instructors consisted of Lindenberg, Spc. Eric Kramer, TF Falcon, EOD, and an



Far left, Staff Sgt. Michael Lindenberg, EOD, TF Falcon, stands in front of a class of Kosovo Police Service officers giving a class on IED and UXO identification and reporting. Left, Lindenberg goes over the individual aspects of each type of ordnance during the class.

Mar. 17.



Above, right, Along with a computer with slides, the EOD team giving the class brought examples of ordnances as visual aids to present during the class.

Left, taff Sgt. Michael Lindenberg, EOD, TF Falcon, imparts information concerning the IXO/UXO training to a KPS officer after the class.



interpreter who Lindenberg spoke through to the KPS for the duration of the class.

The class material consisted mainly of the actions to use when encountering a UXO or an IED. How to identify it, cordon the area, and report it to higher.

"It's very similar to the UXO and IED training that US Soldiers go through," said Lindenberg.

Throughout the course of the class, Lindenberg not only instructed KPS verbally on how to identify IEDs and UXOs, but also brought defused ordnances to provide visual aids to the students.

Each time a familiar explosive device found in Kosovo was shown, a murmur of recognition would arise from the KPS students.

"UXO mitigation is an ongoing problem for any country that (has) gone through a war," Houston said.

After the period of instruction, the Soldiers from EOD stayed behind to answer any of the other questions the KPS had. After everyone had left, the EOD team packed up, to return again the following Monday.

"We began these classes in the beginning of February," Lindenberg said, "but I think we're approaching week eight," he said.

"This kind of training is happening in every division across Kosovo," Lindenberg said, "and it will go on until we have the entire KPS trained."

Walk The Line

Story, Photos, Layout & Design by Spc. Daniel J. Nichols

TF Alamo Patrols The FYROM Border

On the afternoon of April 11, 1st and 2nd squads from 1st Plt, Company A, 1st Platoon, Task Force Alamo marched out to the airfield on Camp Bondsteel to board helicopters for a border patrol on the south side of Kosovo. What would have been a two hour ride in a Humvee turned into a quick 10 minute flight to the mountains that run along the border of Kosovo and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

"We find that the Humvee's would be more cumbersome than advantageous," 2nd Lt. James Benson, platoon leader, 1st Plt., Co. A, TF Alamo, said. "So what the aircraft allows us to do is quickly reach an area that would be extremely difficult to reach by a Humvee," he said.

Upon landing, the troops dismounted the aircraft and ran straight into the prone position, treating the mission with all the seriousness of a combat situation. After the helicopters had picked up and flown off, the Soldiers moved into the nearby woods to set up security, and planned their movement through the rest of the patrol.

Sgt. John Rowell, HHC, TF Alamo, who was part of 1st squad on the patrol said, "The air missions are a big part of our unit." Our sector, is very mountainous, very hilly, and mostly inaccessible. We have a large sector of border that needs to be covered. The air missions benefit us by getting us to these locations where we need to perform a border patrol, Rowell said.

After checking radio communication and their current grid coordinates, the team picked up and moved down a rough dirt trail through the woods.

"For the majority of the mission we were within a hundred meters of the border," Benson said. The patrol made quick stops every 500 meters to check their location to ensure the patrol didn't cross the border of FYROM.

As the patrol moved up and down the mountainous terrain, signs of woodcutting and the muddy tracks of animal drawn carts were visible everywhere. The area was littered with bare tree trunks cut too short, and the tracks of pack animals made the purpose of the Soldiers' patrol apparent.

"The things we look for on a border patrol," Benson said, "are signs of vehicles, and by vehicles we mean not just motorized vehicles, horse drawn carts are usually what they use up there."

Smugglers rely heavily on these types of carts in order to move from FYROM over the hills into Kosovo. "They can bring smuggled goods across from Macedonia where the roads are better, down those trails into a couple of the towns in the mountains and distribute it all over Kosovo," said Benson.

After a few hours and about four kilometers of rough terrain later, the patrol halted to call in the helicopters to arrange pick up at the helicopter landing zone.

The landing zone was located on top of a far away hill that was in view for most of the patrol. "It would take two hours to get Humvee up there," Benson said.

After radio communication had been established, the patrol pushed forward, abandoning their current trail to move up the side of the mountain they had been skirting. Being at such a high elevation, the trail switched from dirt to snow as they moved higher and higher towards the HLZ.

They "popped smoke" to signal their location to the 'birds' that were already flying overhead. The patrol moved out across empty fields in a wedge formation.

"There are no bullets flying here, and that gives us the opportunity to go on a real world patrol with a training focus," Benson said.

Pretty much all the other deployments, said Benson, Soldiers are going to Iraq, Soldiers are going to Afghanistan, Soldiers are getting shot at the entire time and that becomes the focus. "But here you get a chance to get really, really good at the nuts and bolts of what the infantry is," he said.

A few minutes later, the patrol arrived at the HLZ. After establishing radio communication with the helicopters, the patrol received instructions that their ride would be arriving early. The team double timed it and boarded the aircraft that would bring them back home.



ABOVE: 1st Sqd, 1st Plt., Co. A, TF Alamo, moves through the woods down dirt cart trails near the FYROM border. Evidence of illegal woodcutting could be seen all throughout the patrol.

TOP LEFT: Radio communication and land navigation skills were vital assets during the patrol.

BOTTOM LEFT: 2nd Lt. James Benson, 1st. Plt., Co. A TF Alamo, establishes radio communication with air support during the border patrol.

LEFT: After the patrol had marched five kilometers along the border they arrive at the Helicopter Landing Zone where they move out to board the helicopters back to Camp Bondsteel.

Apr. 11.

dancon march

May . 7 .

Story by: Spec. J. TaShun Joyce
Layout & Design Remix by: Sgt. Matthew Chlosta



Photo by: Spec. Eugene DuBielak, 1F Houston

KFOR Soldiers walk up an incline at an easier portion of the DANCON route located on the outskirts of Mitrovica/Mitrovica on May 7. The route begins on pavement then later turns into a rugged dirt road with steep hills and sharp turns that continue upward overlooking the countryside.

Inset photo, from right to left MNTF(E) Task Force Falcon EOD Soldiers, 1st Sgt. Stewart Houston, Anniston, Ala., and Sgt. Eric Kramer, Moody, Ala., walk along side an international peacekeeper through the rain on Oct. 8, outside of Mitrovica/Mitrovica, during the third DANCON march.



Photo by: Sgt. Matthew Chlosta

Despite the cold and rainy conditions that lingered within the Kosovo skies the morning of May 7, a mass of Kosovo Force Soldiers numbering 1,071, representing all walks of life assembled at Camp Olaf Rye near Mitrovica/Mitrovica to walk together and participate in the Danish Contingent March.

The DANCON is a popular Danish tradition for Danish battalions serving away from their homeland, dating back over 30 years and has taken place in Kosovo every year since 1999.

To take part in the DANCON, interested participants had to submit a registration form to the Danish battalion and pay a 20 euro entrance fee nearly a month prior to the scheduled march. For those who missed the deadline or were unable to participate on May 7, they were afforded the opportunity register for the next DANCON scheduled for June 4.

As early 4:00 a.m. Soldiers prepared for the two-plus hour trip out of sector loading up on large tour buses, cramming into humvees, and warming up their sport utility vehicles.

"The DANCON march is a good way to get Soldiers from different countries together to have a good time," Capt. T. H. Sigvardt, Danish battalion Sports and Welfare officer, Multinational Task Force North. "Marching is a basic Soldier skill and having a good time training is a good thing."

By no means did being fun exclude the march from being challenging. Soldiers who participated had only eight hours to navigate 25.2 kilometers of rough and hilly terrain wearing their complete uniform, carrying at least 22 pounds (10 kilos) and their issued firearm. Although the march was less about time and more about completion, a French Soldier from MNTF(N) crossed the finish line first in 2 hours, 12 minutes, and 13 seconds.

"To participate it is very important that you have done some serious training before participating in this, quite rough march to complete it without any injuries or blisters," Col. K. Pedersen, Danish Battalion commanding officer, MNTF(N).

Throughout the route there were several break points where Soldiers could get fruit, water, and medical attention if needed, before continuing the march. No serious injuries occurred during the event but for medical reasons three participants did not complete the march.

"I hope to see as many Soldiers take part in the next march," Sigvardt said. "Hopefully we will have better weather than we had on this one."

"It was an experience that everyone should go through," Sgt. First Class Ramiro Hernandez, G-3 training non commissioned officer in charge, Task Force Falcon. "It gives you a chance to find yourself and reflect on things besides just work and focus on what we have at home."

"The DANCON march is a good way to get Soldiers from different countries together to have a good time," Capt. T. H. Sigvardt, Danish Battalion Sports and Welfare officer, MNTF(N)

MNTF (E) + MNTF (C) Cross-boundary Operations during Operation New Frontier

Story and Photos by Staff Sgt. Brandon Krahmer
Layout and Design Remix by Sgt. Matthew Chlosta

Under a cover of darkness, a multi-national squad of Kosovo Force Soldiers, lead by 2nd Lt. James Benson, platoon leader, 1st Platoon, Company A, Task Force Alamo, waited for an inbound UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter to pick them up and take them to a remote hilltop near the Administrative Boundary Line May 9.

While the helicopter was still a few minutes away, the Soldiers saw headlights from an approaching vehicle and leapt into action as they set up a hasty vehicle checkpoint along the road.

After stopping the vehicle, greeting the driver and performing a quick search the Soldiers let it pass and resumed their positions waiting for the aircraft.

The hasty vehicle checkpoint and night observation mission were both part of Operation New Frontier, a joint exercise held between Soldiers from Multi-National Task Forces East and Center.

Benson explained that their participation in this mission helped showcase the ability of the different task forces to cooperate on numerous types of missions.

"There was a series of tasks that KFOR wanted validated, which is basically we just go out and execute these things and prove that KFOR can do it," Benson said. "One of those tasks was to air-assault a platoon into an area that's not in their own AOR (area of responsibility). So, we moved into task force north's area instead of operating in east's area where we usually operate."

Two platoons from A Co. were air-assaulted into the AOR belonging to MNTF (North), near the Administrative Boundary Line.

During their three-day stay in the field, the troops of Co. A., as well as Estonian and Danish Army Soldiers who worked with them, performed patrols throughout the area, set up and maintained 24-hour security of their assembly area, executed vehicle checkpoints and accomplished a multitude of other tasks and missions.

Sgt. Adam Martinez, 2nd Plt., Co. A, Task Force Alamo, shared what it was like to work side-by-side with Soldiers from MNTF (C), and also what he learned from working in an AOR that wasn't his own.

"It was great," he said. "I worked with the Danes, and what we did was basically split up two of our guys and assigned them to the Danes and they gave us two guys. So, we got to work hands-on with the Danes."

The focus of combining their forces was to emphasize joint-operability and cooperation between different task forces, Martinez said.

"As far as the cooperation between the two task forces, it was great," he said. "They got to see how we go out on patrol and I got their input on how they would actually go into an area and patrol that area."

Martinez said that overall, he enjoyed working with his multi-national partners in their respective AOR.

"Working with the Danes was pretty fun," he said. "The language barrier wasn't there because of the fact that pretty much all of them spoke English."

Benson echoed Martinez's sentiment on the cooperation between the two task forces.

"The Danes and the Estonians were absolutely great," he said. "All of them spoke excellent English. There wasn't even a problem with communications. They were able to execute absolutely everything we needed to do."

Martinez said the experience also gave him a broader view as to how cooperation between the task forces will work during future operations.

"Working in this area, which is basically the north sector, sort of brought a little bit more perspective on how to work with the other international KFOR Soldiers," he said.



A multi-national patrol, consisting of Estonian and U.S. Soldiers, walks off the top of a hill where they conducted a brief observation mission during Operation New Frontier.

"To do that, we came to this area to work with each other and see how we set up our tactical assembly areas and do our patrols, so that worked out pretty well."

Benson said another element of the mission that was unique to this operation was the fact that his Soldiers were supported by aircraft.

"Another one of the tasks was to be completely sustained by air," he said, "which means nobody was trucking food into us or water into us. Our re-supply was all done by air."

During the re-supply mission, food for a company-sized unit was loaded onto a Blackhawk and flown out to the troops. Upon touching down at the secured landing zone, Soldiers moved out from a nearby wood-line, quickly unloaded the food and carried the containers to a central point. "That was welcome sight," Martinez said.

Soldiers of MNTF (East) and MNTF (Center) conducted a three day cross-boundary operation showcasing cooperation and other capabilities between the two task forces May 8-11



May . 9 .

An MNTF(E) Soldier watches as his helicopter lands on an LZ at the top of a hill in the MNTF(C) area of responsibility May 9.

"You can always use hot chow, especially in this cold area."

In addition to being able to take supplies out to forward units, another key task was making sure any potential injured troops could be quickly evacuated out of the field.

"We also attempted a MEDEVAC (medical evacuation)," Benson said.

The Soldiers treated simulated casualties and prepared them for evacuation, but Mother Nature had different plans for the mission.

"We went through the entire process right up to the bird taking off," he said. "Just like our extraction today, the bird was unable to take off due to weather."

But, a MEDEVAC performed by TF Talon and TF Hellas Soldiers May 8 went exactly according to plan.

Staff Sgt. Kelly Meyers, Co. C, TF Talon, said the mission went extremely smooth.

"Today's training mission went well due to the fact that we've done some prior training with the Hellas," he said. "We've practiced this type of scenario happening before."

The exercise involved a call for a MEDEVAC, to which Meyers's crew immediately responded, not knowing what possible simulated injuries they would deal with upon arrival to the evacuation site.

"We went in, treated the patients and evacuated them in a timely manner," he said.

As ONF drew to a close, Benson took some time to talk about what this exercise means to the people of Kosovo.

"We're trying to demonstrate to the people of Kosovo the effectiveness of the military forces in Kosovo and our ability to do all these things," he said.

"It heightens the impression of the military forces in the minds of the people when they see we're capable of conducting operations like this, and it gives us more credibility."

Benson also said this most recent exercise, and the missions performed during, hints at how the task forces of KFOR will operate together in the future.

"I see us doing more missions like this," he said. "It's not just a validation task."

"The way that I see things happening here in Kosovo, it's going to force us to rely on missions like this in order to be able to cover the same amount of ground," Benson said. "So, I see this just kind of as a step in the direction that KFOR is heading."

Despite the sometimes-heavy rain and usually-cold temperatures, Benson looked back over his time in the field fondly, and expressed a sense of anticipation for future operations like ONF.

"It was great to get out into the field and not be freezing and buried in snow this time," he said.

"Stuff like this is the reason that all of us joined the infantry, and I'm really looking forward to executing more missions like this."

Breaking new ground by

Story, Photos By Pfc. Christina Vanyo Layout & Design by Sgt. Matthew Chlosta

Once home to both Kosovar Albanians and Serbs, Babush i Serbeve/Srpski Babus has been inhabited solely by Albanians since the destruction of Serbian homes in 1999 during acts of ethnic violence.

A small village near Ferizaj/Urosevac, the abandoned community has stood for many years as a symbolic graveyard, with the barely standing skeletal remains of Serbian homes sprinkled throughout.

On June 6 Soldiers from Multi-National Task Force (East), whose sector contains this tiny and dilapidated hamlet, began work on the clearing and rebuilding project during an official ground breaking ceremony.

The cleanup is designed to bring some physical closure to the land, as well as help bring some emotional closure to some of it's internally displaced persons.

"This is to begin demolishing bombed-out and destroyed Serbian homes," Lt. Col. Jose A. Perez, assistant chief of staff, G-5, Task Force Falcon, said.

"New homes will eventually be built in their place, for displaced persons. Today's events are to recognize the start of the demolition of destroyed Serbian homes that will eventually be replaced with new homes for displaced persons" Perez said.

The project has received 2.7 million Euro through the international community and European Perspective, a Greek Non-Governmental Organization, which is the United Nations High Commission on Refugees implementing partner for the project.

EP acts as the 'project manager' and controls the funding, Maj. Charles O. Starnes, deputy, G-5, TF Falcon, said.

One goal of this project, Starnes explained, is to make the land ready for reconstruction.

The initial phase, clearing and removing debris, is being done to prepare the damaged portion of the village for reconstruction so displaced persons can return to their former homes."

There are 83 families on the returns list, Starnes said, although EP predicts only 73 families will qualify to fully rebuild their homes and regain property.

According to Starnes, the 73 qualified families have met all of the requirements to have their homes reconstructed.

The other 10 families are currently having difficulty with legal issues, Starnes said.

These matters, such as lost records and poor documentation of ownership, are unfortunately common. Starnes said reinstallation of utilities is also part of the rebuilding process.

Electrical infrastructure, rebuilding the main road running throughout the village, secondary roads, such as driveways, water source and sewer infrastructure, all must be figured into the reconstruction.

Starnes said different elements of MNTF (E) are working together with civil authorities to complete this project successfully. For example, the Kosovo Inspector of the Kosovo Protection Corps, together with TF Hellas and EP, has aided the KPC in acquiring machinery to move the rubble. This is TF Hellas sector," Starnes said, "They're here today and involved in this whole project."

The former homeowners are being encouraged by EP to maintain jobs during the return and reconstruction process.

In fact, arrangements have been made by EP for the heads of households to work during the rebuilding stage, Starnes said.

Remaining employed will promote income and sustainability of the returning people, he added.

While the houses are being constructed, returning Serbian families have been offered residence in the Serbian town of Bablak/Babljak, Kosovo, almost directly across from Babush i Serbeve/Srpski Babus.

The KPC said they hope to be done clearing rubble from the site within 30 days.

Clearing old ground



Above, a member of the Kosovo Protection Corps looks out over the local landscape from the former Serbian village of Babush i Serbeve/Srpski Babus, near Ferizaj/Urosevac on June 6.

Below, on right, Col. Mark Campsey, chief of staff, TF Falcon, MNTF(E), speaks with a member of the KPC June 6. TF Hellas and TF Falcon will clear dilapidated houses to make room for newly constructed homes.



June . 6 .

Following TF Hellas and the KPC's completion of rubble clearing and demolition, private contractors will be brought into the area to begin installation of utilities.

The village is one of many IDP sites throughout Kosovo where residents, regardless of ethnicity, were involuntarily forced to leave their homes. Babush i Serbeve/Srpski Babus is the largest returns project in Kosovo for this year.

Col. Mark Campsey, chief of staff, TF Falcon, MNTF (E), attended the ground breaking as a representative of Brig. Gen. Darren Owens, commanding general, MNTF(E).

Local Leaders Learn, Texas Style

Story by Cpt. Sunset Belinsky

Photos by Spc. Michael O'Neal, TF Alamo

Layout and Design by Sgt. Matthew Chlosta

June . 6 .



Musa Misini, Municipality Assembly President for Viti/Vitina, (left) tries his hand at the lasso after a few pointers from Sgt. Curtis Murray, Co. A, Task Force Alamo (right) outside of the South Town DFAC after the earlier municipality meeting.

A groundbreaking training session for municipal leaders from south eastern Kosovo was held at Camp Bondsteel June 6. Municipal assembly presidents and chief executive officers gathered with leaders from Kosovo Force's Multi-National Task Force (East) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to share initiatives in good governance.

Transitioning to civil authority is one of KFOR's main missions. The seminar provided an opportunity to exchange good ideas and better ways for the civil authorities to conduct the business of running a municipality.

"The event gave the municipal assembly teams an opportunity to exchange success stories and how they were able to make their projects a success, and learn from each other," Maj. Alba Villanueva, deputy, Civil Military Operations, Task Force Falcon, from Austin, Texas, said.

KFOR and OSCE planned the event with the help of Liaison Monitoring Teams.

1st Lt. Carlos Cantu, LMT 6, TF POL/UKR, of Harlingen, Texas said, "We worked in coordination with OSCE municipal monitoring teams to help give information about the seminar to municipality leadership."

According to Villanueva, OSCE is taking a bigger role in Kosovo and assisting with developing good governance and rule of law in Kosovo. "OSCE provides insight about legal issues and how the municipality should be run," said 1st Lt. John Degeest, LMT 2, TF Houston, from Austin, Texas.

Preparing and advising municipal leadership to make the most of the seminar was a team effort. The municipality president of Novoborde/Novo Brdo gave a presentation on successful multi-ethnic leadership. Degeest and his OSCE counterpart were able to help "discuss effective communication strategy" in preparation for the presentation.

Leaders from the Kosovo municipalities of Kamenice/Kamenica, Gjilan/Gnjilane and Shtime/Stimlje discussed open government, focusing on compliance with the official language policy, a central location for access to public services, and initiatives to involve local leaders and inform citizens through the Internet.

Local leaders from Ferizaj/Urosevac, Kacanik/Kacanik and Viti/Vitina explained their initiatives with citizen involvement. They talked about the returns process, road construction supported by communities, and village leader networks.

The Strpce/Shterpe leader focused on spatial planning, or zoning. Hani I Elezit/Deneral Jankovic, a pilot municipality, shared their dedication to improving the community with a fire station.

Following the presentations, the group was treated to a traditional Texas-style barbecue. The casual setting allowed participants from all groups to relax and talk to each other. Sgt. Curtis Murray, Co. A, TF Alamo, from San Antonio, Texas, gave lessons to all takers on calf roping, which provided smiles all around.

"It was a good forum for them to socialize and talk to each other. It was encouraging to facilitate the inter-ethnic communication. It was good to see the leaders of different ethnicities interacting, where otherwise that may not be happening," Cantu said.



Brig. Gen. Darren Owens, commanding general, MNTF(E), right, presents a Texas cowboy hat to Gafurr Ymeri, vice president, Municipal Assembly Ferizaj/Urosevac during the municipality meeting at the South Town DFAC VIP room, on June 6.

Balkans

The schizophrenic Kosovo weather finally cleared away just in time for a highly anticipated annual birthday party celebration.

On a picture perfect cloudless day and with President of Kosovo Fatmir Sejdiu and Prime Minister of Kosovo Agim Ceku in attendance, U.S. Soldiers from the Texas National Guard's 36th Infantry Division and Multi-National Task Force (East) marked July 4 as America's 230th year of independence during a ceremony at 11 a.m. on Victory Field.

After the playing of the national anthem, Brig. Gen. Darren Owens, commanding general, MNTF(E), gave a short but powerful speech about America's struggle for independence.

"We as Americans can proudly say the Declaration of Independence, signed in seventeen seventy-six, gave birth to the ideals of freedom that others in the world only dream about," Owens said. "We are free to love, worship and live as we want – but freedom does have a price. Our service here in Kosovo is part of that price.

"We should pause and remember that those symbols of our power and freedom are reflected in your actions everyday as you brave men and women in uniform sacrifice being with your families and if need be even your lives in preserving liberty," Owens said. More than halfway through a yearlong NATO peace enforcement mission in the Balkans, Soldiers enjoyed the fast paced 30 minute ceremony.

"I enjoyed it," Sgt. Stephen Forde, Company A, Task Force

Alamo, Austin, Texas, said.

"It was quick," he added.

The ceremony's finale had the crowd "rubber necking" to see a flyover by three Blackhawk and two Apache helicopters from MNTF(E)'s Task Force Talon.

The "birds" flew in a symbolic wedge formation with the medical evacuation Blackhawk helicopter flanked on both sides by another Blackhawk and an Apache on the perimeter. Sgt. Levi Frost, helicopter mechanic, TF Talon, Waterloo, Iowa, said.

"I think it went well," Frost said. "I really liked the speech. I – really liked the flyover. I felt the importance of the ceremony – the weight of it (the deployment) for the first time with the appearance of the President and Prime Minister of Kosovo (being here). It really makes me feel appreciated."

"I really like his (Owens') speech," Forde said. "He's sincere. He's a good guy."

Owens finished his speech with an eye toward the future of Kosovo and the significance of the Soldiers' sacrifices.

"Today we not only honor the independence of the United States, we honor your service, your courage, and countless sacrifices in this distant land far from home," Owens said. "I do not view the work that KFOR does here as just preserving the peace for a safe Kosovo, I view it in a nobler, more exalted light; I view the great work we do here as part of laying the cornerstone of liberty for generations yet to come. Through your service and sacrifice, you help make every day Independence Day for the United States of America."

4th of July

Right, Sgt. Maj. Jerry Horsley, operations sergeant major, G3, Task Force Falcon, from Cedar Creek, Texas, bows his head at 11 a.m., July 4, on Camp Bondsteel's Victory Field during the Independence Day ceremony invocation.



Story, Photo, Layout & Design by
Sgt. Matthew Chlosta

Task Force Houston Soldier helps young Kosovo boy through humanitarian effort



July.9.

Lentrit hugs his Father Sendi Aliu as he talks with members of 3rd Squad, 2nd platoon, Company B Task Force Houston during a visit to their house to discuss arrangements to secure passports for father and son.

Story and Photos by: Spc. Gene DuBielak
Layout & Design Remix by: Sgt. Matthew Chlosta

Troop from Bravo Company's 3rd Squad, 2nd Platoon shows selfless service and facilitates child's trip to U.S. for medical treatment *****

While on a patrol in the town of Malisheve / Malisevo Kosovo this past January a man approached the members of 3rd Squad, 2nd Platoon, Company B, Task Force Houston. As the residents of Kosovo often do this man sought help from the Soldiers. The man told Staff Sgt. Matthew Malmquist, squad leader, that his son needed help. Believing the man's son was in immediate danger Malmquist ordered the squad to follow the man in order to assist his son.

The Kosovar Albanian led the squad to the school in Malisheve / Malisevo. It was there that the Soldiers from 3rd squad first saw young Lentrit Aliu. The boy walked toward his father with obvious difficulty. Initially it was difficult to tell what was wrong with him. A closer look showed that he had one leg considerably longer than the other and that the shorter leg appeared inflexible.

In a private room at the school Sendi Aliu, the boy's father informed Malmquist of his son's condition.

"He has a genetic defect called proximal focal femoral deficiency," he told him through an interpreter. Aliu wanted to know if the Soldiers could take his son to Camp Bondsteel for the medical attention he needed.

Proximal femoral focal deficiency is a rare birth defect that affects the pelvis and proximal femur (thighbone). The result is that the hip is deformed and the leg itself is shortened. The condition may be only on one side or it may be on both.

Malmquist told Aliu that Camp Bondsteel did not have the medical resources to help Lentrit. Malmquist then asked Aliu for his contact information so that they could look into what could be done to help his son.

That evening in January back at Camp Monteith the squad had a meeting to discuss Lentrit's condition and decide what if anything they could do for him. "When we saw the kid we decided we had to help" Cpl. Rickey Holbert, assistant squad leader, 3rd sqd. 2nd pl., Co. B, TF Houston, said. "We just didn't know where to start."

Malmquist turned to the Internet in search of answers. Slowly the pieces started to fall into place. The Internet search found a pro bono hospital in Shreveport La. that was both able and willing to perform the surgery. With the surgical aspect resolved the next problem to solve was how to transport Lentrit and his father to the United States.

The process from then on would be long and complicated requiring both time and money. The Soldiers' time came when available from an already full schedule. The money came from an unexpected source.

While the squad wanted to help they were not seeking attention or publicity. Few outside of the squad knew of the efforts to help young Lentrit. One night while talking to his mother in Minnesota Malmquist told her of the squad's efforts. Wanting to help, his mother told his grandmother.

Together, Malmquist's family solicited donations from churches to help defray the costs of airline tickets, passports, and money to cover expenses both while in the U.S. and to help the family in Kosovo while the father was gone. It was then that the press became aware of what the Soldier's were doing to help the young Kosovar.

When it was discovered that Malmquist was from Bryan, Texas the Bryan Eagle newspaper wrote a story and asked readers to contribute what they could to help facilitate Malmquist's efforts. The response from both Bryan, Texas and the Minnesota churches was overwhelming. The money raised was enough to cover all costs and to establish a small account for the family in Kosovo to live on.

"At first I was little upset with unwanted publicity, but it turned out to be a good thing. Malmquist said. "It would not have been possible to do

it without them. It was an incredible thing they did."

With the financial issues taken care of Malmquist focused on all the other tasks that had to be completed before Lentrit could go to the states and receive the medical attention he needed. Malmquist assisted with getting the father and son passports. Once the passports were acquired it was necessary to get visas to allow the pair to travel to the US.

To acquire the visas it was necessary to travel to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The provisional government of Kosovo could not issue them as Kosovo does not have status as a country, so there is no official U.S. embassy.

With most of the arrangements made there were still a few minor issues left to resolve. Malmquist made sure that Lentrit and his father would be met at the airport with by an Albanian interpreter and a wheelchair to aid his movement to the terminal.

One of the last and most important arrangements was made with the assistance of a hospital in Austria.

"At first I was little upset with unwanted publicity, but it turned out to be a good thing," Malmquist said. "It would not have been possible to do it without them. It was an incredible thing they did."

"When he has his surgery they will amputate his right leg at the knee and fit him with a prosthetic," Malmquist said. "He will probably outgrow the prosthetic three times before he can be fitted with one that will be permanent."

The hospital in Austria agreed to fit Lentrit when needed and supply the prosthetic limbs free of charge.

With all the arrangements now made it was time for young Lentrit to leave home for the first time. On July 9, with his extended family around him Lentrit tearfully loaded into the waiting SUV with his father, Malmquist and Spc. Derek Rantala to head to the airport in Pristina/ Prishtine.

As the truck pulled slowly away from the only home he had known his father tried to reassure him that everything would be all right. During the drive to the airport his spirits returned and the ever present smile of a young boy returned.

At the airport the family said their goodbyes and everyone wished both father and son luck. Lentrit hugged his family and shook hands with the Soldiers as he and his father began the first phase of their journey.

"To tell the truth we didn't know if it was going to happen" Rantala said. "I am glad that he is getting to go and receive the care he needs."



Staff Sgt. Matthew Malmquist, Scout team 4, Company C TF Houston Sits with Lentrit Aliu at the Gjilane / Gjilane regional municipal hospital during a visit to determine his medical condition. In order to obtain a visa it had to be proven that surgery needed could not be provided in Kosovo.

Story, Photos, Layout & Design by Sgt. Matthew Chlosta



Sgt. Mark Potter, military working dog handler, TF Falcon, Coventry, R.I., and his German Shepherd Hena walk through the Shterpe/Strpe market on July 20, to conduct their weekly explosives detection sweep.

Dog Handlers keep Kosovo safe & secure in MNMF(E)

He padded softly and quietly through the rooms filled with early morning shadows. Each room was illuminated only by the morning light that cascaded through the windows. He listened to his sergeant's commands as he searched for the scent of explosives. Rex2A325 is the first line of defense on most operations in Kosovo. He is a Belgian Malinois Military Working Dog.

"You go where the dog takes you, especially in the dark," Sgt. Clinton Darrisaw III, military working dog handler, Task Force Falcon, Jonesboro, Ga., said, after he and Rex completed their sweep for explosives inside a school near the village of Zllatar/Zlatare on the morning of July 18, before a TF Hellas medical civil assistance program later that day. Rex2A325 is able to identify explosives by smelling odors undetectable to humans.

If the dogs do detect explosives, "(We) evacuate the whole building and don't let anyone in until EOD (explosive ordinance disposal) gets here," Darrisaw III, said.

The Army's use of dog handlers and their dogs has been around since before WW II, but now they are busier than ever before as the American military fights the Global War on Terror on multiple fronts and in dozens of countries. The four dog handlers deployed to Camp Bondsteel are Regular Army

Soldiers from the 230th Military Police Company in Germany with two from Hanau and two from Wiesbaden. They deployed here for a year and rotated into Kosovo, with their individual dogs this spring. Unlike in Iraq, where Darrisaw III earned a Bronze Star and experienced a vehicle borne explosive device detonation within 100 meters of his position, Kosovo has been a lot calmer deployment. Potter has also been deployed to Iraq where insurgents put out bounties on the dogs and their handlers, according to Darrisaw III. Darrisaw III was deployed to Baghdad and attached to the 1st Cavalry Division from 2004-2005, while Sgt. Mark Potter, military working dog handler, TF Falcon, Coventry, R.I., was in Mosul, Iraq for seven months in 2004.

In Iraq, Darrisaw III and his dog did cordon and searches, responded to IEDs (improvised explosive devices) and went on raids. "I went outside the wire almost everyday," Darrisaw III said. "Everyday, I was putting my life on the line." Here the military working dogs are used for detection and patrol.

"The military working dogs senses of sight, smell and hearing enhance his detection capabilities to provide commanders with a physical and psychological deterrent to criminal activity," Staff Sgt. Michael Derr, kennel master, TF Falcon, Waukomis, Okla., said. They go on similar missions here compared to the ones in Iraq, but without bullets flying and mortars dropping on their heads, Darrisaw III, said.

On a daily basis our job entails, "Installation force protection, law enforcement support, customs support, high risk personnel security missions (and) contingency operations support," Derr said. Every Thursday the dog handlers do a detection sweep through the weekly market in Shterpe/Strpe, where they check for explosives. The market experienced a small bomb explosion in the fall of 2005 that injured four people. "They see us and they feel safer to go about (their) daily business in the market." Fortunately, the dog handlers haven't found any explosives in Kosovo during our time here so far, Potter said. "It's good that we didn't find anything," Derr said, "as long as there is nothing to find. That is a good thing." According to Potter, the dogs did give a response to explosive materials or residue during a cordon and search earlier this year but nothing was found until weeks later.



The dog handlers love their job and are a well traveled bunch, especially during the current Global War on Terror. Potter has deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba during his time as a dog handler, while Darrisaw III has been to Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Hungary. "One of the best active duty deployments you can get is Kosovo," Potter said. The hardest part for the dog handlers during their frequent deployments is, "deploying by yourself and relying on yourself," Potter said. "We rely on other units once we hit the ground. Units may not know how to use us. Then we have to explain what we do."

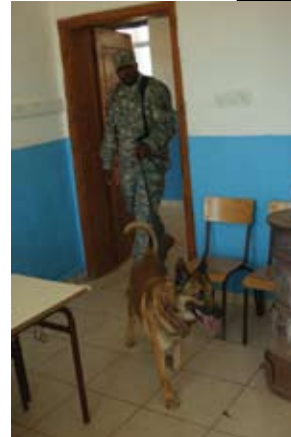
All military working dogs and their handlers are initially trained by the 341st Training Squadron Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. "At Lackland they are taught all the commands in English," Potter handler picks up a dog the commands are exactly the same."

The dogs are taught to look for people, drugs and explosives based on the reward system. If the dog or someone, they're given a burlap "Bitewurst" or a "Kong" ball as their reward, he said. The only handler on Bondsteel that searches for narcotics is Sgt. Erica Misiano, military working dog handler, "One of my main missions is to conduct Health and Welfare (Inspections)," Misiano said. Her dog, systematically search every barracks room and then Gaston will passively respond by sitting if on detected. Gaston also searches the luggage of Soldiers who go on FMPP, she added. "If you can smoke sniff it, the dog will find it," Potter said.

In addition to Rex2A325, the dog handlers at CBS have three German Shepherds. "These breeds are the most well rounded," Derr said. "They have the 'best attitude and abilities for our mission.' On July 20, after the military dog handlers' weekly Shterpe/Strpe market explosives detection sweep, the U.S. Army dog handlers attended, a joint multi-national training session outside the village of Shtime/Stimlje. The group that attended included dog handlers from the Kosovo Police Service, the German Army, United Nations Mission in Kosovo Police and Denmark.

The "purpose is so that dog handlers from many countries can come together and do the training together," Bjorn Erik Friegaard, chief instructor, UNMIK-P, Oslo, Norway, said. Christel Shelton, dog handler instructor, UNMIK-P, said, the KPS dog handler unit, "has been in existence for three years now. It is the first time they were able to compare themselves to other dog handlers and they saw that they were not that bad. The KPS has drug dogs and are starting up an explosive dog unit also, Friegaard said.

You have to be an M.P. first before you can apply to become a military working dog handler, Potter said. "It's competitive. It's something people want to do," Potter added. "It's an awesome job."



Sgt. Clinton Darrisaw III, military working dog handler, 230th Military Police Company, K-9, Hanau, Germany, Task Force Falcon, and "Rex," Darrisaw's Belgian Malinois Military Working Dog conduct an explosives detection sweep at 8:15 a.m. before a TF Hellas's MEDCAP on July 18 in a school on the outskirts of the village Zllatar/Zlatare.

"It's competitive. It's something people want to do," Potter added. "It's an awesome job."

at Lackland Air said. "So when a finds something military dog TF Falcon. Gaston, will odor of drugs is it, inject it or

Aug. 15.

Letnice/Letnica hosts Kosovar Catholics' annual pilgrimage to the church of the "Black Madonna"



An elderly man kisses the statue of the Black Madonna on Aug. 15 after the annual Assumption of Mary celebration and mass at Our Lady of Cernagore church in Letnice/Letnica.

Story, Photos, Layout & Design by Sgt. Matthew Chlosta

In August 1928, a 17-year-old female named Gonxhas "Agnes" Bojaxhiu made her way to the annual Catholic holiday "Feast of the Assumption" celebration in the tiny border village of Letnice/Letnica, Kosovo.

After hearing the voice of God speak to her during her prayers at the Our Lady of Cernagore Catholic Church, the teenager dedicated the remainder of her life to God.

"Agnes" later became known throughout the world as Mother Teresa.

"The Letnice/Letnica Pilgrimage is a celebration for Mary's assumption into heaven and the Catholic celebration for the feast of the Holy Mary on the fifteenth of August," Cpt. Eric Martinson, commander, Company C, Task Force Alamo, Rockwall, Texas, wrote in response to an interview by e-mail on Aug. 14. "The celebration in Letnice/Letnica has been going on since the 14th Century according to local history. One of its notable participants is Mother Teresa, who gave her life to serving after attending mass in 1928."

Every year in in mid-August thousands of pilgrims from all around the world travel to Letnice/Letnica to celebrate the Catholic holiday. In conjunction with the local authorities, Multi-National Task Force (East) helps provide a safe and secure environment for the festivalgoers.

The church

The Our Lady of Cernagore dominates the valley below, with its two tall sky scrapping steeples and luminous white walls.

The place of worship, built in 1866, is tucked away between the lush, green, rolling hills of Letnice/Letnica. The church straddles the Kosovo side of the administrative boundary line with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

"The most significant thing I saw at the festival was the church," Martinez wrote. "And, even though we couldn't get close enough to touch it, it will be a significant part of my experience."

The Black Madonna

Outside the chapel hundreds, if not thousands of pilgrims streamed past the replicate statue of the "Black Madonna." The original "Black Madonna" is in Czestochowa, Poland.

The statue's moniker comes from the more realistic portrayal of the darker skin tones of Mary and the baby Jesus than the more modern Caucasian look depicted in European renditions of Mary and Jesus.

As worshipers walked past the iconic figure throughout the day, they muttered prayers, blessed themselves and wiped clothing of sick or dead loved ones over the statue to help heal their loved ones.

"It's tradition, if they have the clothes or possessions of a loved one touched by the statue (it will ensure) possibly a cure or a blessing," Ramirez said.

"This is something very big in their hearts," Sgt. 1st Class David Lovato, noncommissioned officer in charge, LMT 4, TF Alamo, Temple, Texas, said.

Many pilgrims waited in long lines in front of outdoor confessionals with local priests, while others lit candles and prayed at the feet of the Statue of Mary outside the church.

Afterwards, the festival goers: families, friends, couples and stragglers streamed back down the hillside through the stalls of the town's open air market before they melted away in the late afternoon by foot, bus and packed car loads.



Two French Soldiers carry a painting of Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ during their pilgrimage on Aug. 15 to the annual Assumption of Mary celebration and mass held at Our Lady of Cernagore church in Letnice/Letnica.

Letnice/Letnica



Thousands of pilgrims make their pilgrimage on Aug. 15 to the annual Assumption of Mary celebration and mass held at Our Lady of Cernagore church in Letnice/Letnica.

Task Force Dragoon normally uses Humvees for their steady state patrols. TF Dragoon Soldiers normally operate as an Army National Guard field artillery unit in Bentonville, Ark. But, for their deployment to Kosovo, they were retrained to work as military policemen. They have conducted patrols all over MNTF(E)'s sector throughout the year. Below, During their patrols TF Dragoon Soldiers take the opportunity to conduct information operation interviews with locals to monitor the climate and concerns of different areas.



Photo by Sgt. Matthew Chlosta

MP trained Soldiers patrol MNTF(E) daily on foot; by Humvee come rain or shine

Photos, Story by Spc. Daniel J. Nichols
Layout & Design by Sgt. Matthew Chlosta



In every organization there is often one individual or group of individuals that no one understands or knows very well. They generally keep to themselves while going about their business.

With a group of Soldiers who work as military police, their unique missions, and their odd location of working out of mid-town, Task Force Dragoon is often the question mark in other Soldiers' minds. Despite this, the Soldiers of TF Dragoon had plenty of answers about what they do in support of the Multi-National Task Force (East) mission.

"Mainly we multi-task a lot," Sgt. James Peters, squad leader, 3rd squad, 1st Platoon, TF Dragoon, Lowell, Ark., said. "It sounds funny, but we've done everything from escorts to steady state to cordon and search to TCPs (traffic control points) to air insertion."

Because Task Force Dragoon troops are trained as MPs, there are a number of missions that are given to them because of their skills and qualifications. Monitoring the areas and establishments that are off-limits to Kosovo Force personnel is one of them.

"A lot of times we go out and we find grids for new off limits areas, we check old off limits areas, and ensure that no -- KFOR Soldiers are where they're not supposed be," Peters said. "We get an off limits list about every three months, we go out and check grids and we verify. We also take pictures and get intel for higher up," he said.

Conducting escort missions for visiting dignitaries is also one of the jobs that TF Dragoon normally handles with ease.

"We're tasked with the majority, probably ninety percent of all the escorts," Peters said. "We've escorted the Portuguese, the Italians, four star generals, we've pulled security on admiral's planes at the APOD, and we've pulled security for General Owens," Peters said.

One of the missions TF Dragoon is expected to do is react quickly to any immediate needs of MNTF(E).

"We're responsible for PRF (perimeter reaction force) for Bondsteel, so if anything was to happen on Bondsteel, or within the outer limits of Bondsteel, PRF gets called," Peters said.

"We also secure the gates when something comes up missing on post," said Spc. Jeff Beard, 3rd. Sqd. 1st Plt., TF Dragoon, Bentonville, Ark.

"We kind of have to react quickly," Sgt. William Swafford, team leader, 3rd Sqd., 1st Plt. TF Dragoon, Tulsa, Okla. said.

"Another task force would have a lot of notice," Swafford said. "Whereas we get called out for a TCP, we load up, go outside the gate, and set up a hasty checkpoint because they know a person of interest is going

It sounds funny, but we've done everything from escorts to steady state to cordon and search to TCPs (traffic control points) to air insertion."



Sgt. James Peters, squad leader, 3rd Squad, 1st Platoon, TF Dragoon, and the rest of his squad Sgt. William Swafford, team leader, Spc. Jeff Beard, Spc. Brad Heard, Bentonville, Ark., and Spc. Todd Boyd, Bentonville, Ark., walk the streets of Ferizaj/Urosevac, Nov. 2, during a steady state patrol. Inset, Sgt. Peters, squad leader, 3rd. Sqd. 1st Plt., TF Dragoon and his squad take time to talk to some locals in Viti/Vitina during a steady state patrol Nov. 2.

to be coming down this road."

Yet within the diverse job responsibilities of TF Dragoon, each platoon also has other roles they feel are just as important. One of these is the steady state patrol.

"For first platoon you can call us the eyes and ears for the battle desk as far as the daily goings on in different towns, everything from 'Hey what's going on in Ferizaj/Urosevac to 'What's the road condition like,'" Swafford said.

"We find out a lot more information," Peters said. "We're able to go throughout MNTF(E) to different areas to see what different areas are like, we have a little bit more leeway than some other task forces," he said.

During these patrols, TF Dragoon Soldiers take the time to conduct information operation interviews with local Kosovars.

"With the IO interviews I've done, a lot of times you have to sit there and pump the people for information," Peters said. "It's winter time and when the next rotation gets here I think they're going to fall in on the same questions that we've gotten. 'Hey we've had power for one hour out of twenty three, my road is flooded and all muddy and I can't get to town, and the doctor shows up once every three weeks, and I don't have a job,'" Peters said.

"And then you ask 'What do you think about Islamic extremists?' And they say 'Hey, didn't I tell you my power was out?' These people here are not so much into religion as much as they are about basic necessities," Peters said.

Although the Soldiers are not always able to directly influence some of the problems of the local Kosovars, they do feel that their presence is having a positive effect.

"The best effect that we're having is just us walking around driving in Humvees in towns, people see that," Swafford said. "It has a good effect on the people who live there because they feel safer seeing us, and it has a good effect on people who come from other places who want to cause trouble. They see us there and they don't try anything illegal."

Right, Sgt. 1st Class David Lovato, NCOIC, Liaison & Monitoring Team 4, Task Force Alamo, shows a local Kosovo child how to put a patch on his jacket on Oct. 20 as a German documentary crew films the scene in the student renovated movie theater in Viti/Vitina. LMT 4 shows movies there, free of charge for Kosovars, once a week. Below, kids watch the movie "2Fast2Furious" on Oct.20 at the Viti/Vitina theater.



Oct. 20.

Task Force Alamo's LMT4 conducts weekly Movie Night in Viti/Vitina



Nov. 11.



Good

LMTs are

Liaison & Monitoring Team 6 uses their wealth of experience to plunge into the Kosovo social scene to uncover what's really going on

The Talk of the Town



Nov. 2.

1st Lt. Carlos Cantu, LMT 6, TF Houston, Harlin gen, Texas, and Sgt. Douglas Johnson, LMT 6, TF Houston, Conroe, Texas, review their notes and discuss the findings of their Nov. 2, pulse patrol.

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Task Force Houston goes the extra mile to improve local schools while TF Talon raffle raises \$20,000 to help Binac/Bince school with much needed repairs



Bonus Tracks:

Right, Students of the Binac/Bince school take a break from their studies on Oct. 3.

Photo by: Sgt. Tomy Pickford, HHC TF Talon.

Oct. 3.

NOW THAT'S THE TICKET!

1st Lt. Samantha Garcia, S-1, TF Houston, San Antonio, Texas helps apply primer to the walls of Sadri Masini primary school in Gornja Sipanca / Shipashnice e Eperme. Soldiers of Task Force Houston have shifted to a humanitarian role to assist local residents in the Multi-National Task Force (East) area of operations by helping to improve and refurbish area schools and soccer fields. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jerry Loughridge, HHC, TF Houston

Layout and Design by **Sgt. Matthew Chlosta**



May. 2 - 4.



Sgt. Nicholas Terry, Co. D, TF Houston shoots an azimuth, after plotting his first point during land navigation testing for Expert Infantryman Badge at Falcon 4 Range in June. Photo by Eugene DuBielak, TF Houston

Below, Staff Sgt. Joe Gonzales, TF MedFalcon participates in the Expert Field Medical Badge litter obstacle course to evacuate a casualty as part of EFMB testing on Sept. 7. Photo by Spc. Daniel J. Nichols



EFMB & EIB WLC/BNCOC+NGOES

Sept. 26.



Staff Sgt. Radames Robles, MP Investigator, TF Falcon, and Sgt. Victor Covarrubias, Tactical Operations Center NCO, Co. D., TF Houston, work together on graphic overlays, Sept. 26, during the BNCOC held at Camp Bondsteel, Sept. 16-28. "One of the things that I see when a Soldier comes back from WLC is that they're more professional, more knowledgeable, (and) they have a better understanding of what's required of them as an NCO," Boyer said.

Sept. 2 - 5



1st Lt. Thomas Loftis, Burnet, Texas, left, and Sgt. 1st Class Joe Nathan Bell, Copperas, Cove, Texas, both from Engineer Platoon, Company B, Task Force Houston, listen to remarks from Brig. Gen. Darren Owens, commanding general, Multi-National Task Force (East) during the final deployment ceremony Nov. 11 on Camp Bondsteel's Victory Field.

Bye Ceremony: Nov. 11



Nov. 11.

Staff Sgt. Andres Oviedo, Task Force Talon, Lansing, Mich., listens to remarks from Brig. Gen. Darren Owens, commanding general, Multi-National Task Force (East) during the final deployment ceremony Nov. 11 on Camp Bondsteel's Victory Field.



Nov. 18.

Joint MassCas with Serb Army + MNTF(E) on ABL

my medics and Spc. Danny Burley, 1st Sqd., 2nd Plt., Co. A, TF illien, Texas, center, treat a simulated casualty, Spc. Matthew st Sqd., 2nd Plt., Co. A, TF Houston, Yorktown, Texas, during s casualty exercise coordinated by MNTF(E)'s Joint Impli-Commission with the Serbian Army along the Administrative line.

Photos, Text + Layout & Design by **Sgt. Matthew Chlosta**

Nov. 14.



The Chairman stops by Bondsteel



Marine Gen. Peter Pace, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Of Staff, talks to U.S. Soldiers from Multi-National Task Force (East) during a town hall meeting held at Camp Bondsteel, Nov. 14.

Photos by **Sgt. Pedro Martiz, TF Alamo**
Article + Layout & Design by **Sgt. Matthew Chlosta**

CAMP BONDSTEEL, Kosovo – Nov. 14 – The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff dropped by today to visit with U.S. Soldiers from Operation Joint Guardian's Kosovo Force 7.

Marine Gen. Peter Pace, held a 45 minute town hall meeting with approximately 300 hundred Mult-National Task Force (East) Soldiers.

"It was very informative," Sgt. William Hennessee, military policeman, Task Force Dragoon, Rogers, Ark., said. "He explained about the deployment schedule. He seemed concerned about the Soldiers' questions"

Pace covered a wide range of topics in response to the queries from the MNTF(E) Soldiers, including the current state of the Global War on Terror, the pace and frequency of deployments and civil affairs. Because most of the Soldiers serving with MNTF(E)'s KFOR 7 rotation are from the 36th Infantry Division's Texas National Guard, a lot of the questions centered around their issues.

According to Pace, there might be a change in the works for the Army National Guard pre-mobilization train up to give the Soldiers the opportunity to stay with their families during a 4-6 week period of time before they are

"One year out and five years back," that is the plan for the Army National Guard Soldiers once the Army completes its transformation, Pace said.

activated. Then the plan is they'll have 1 month of predeployment training at their mobilization station and then an 11 month deployment.

That idea sounds great when compared to the current National Guard and Reserve plan, which includes a six month activation/training period, usually at a mobilization duty station far away from their families and then a 12 month deployment. Sometimes National Guard and Reserve Soldiers can be away from their families longer than Regular Army Soldiers, who train up at their home duty station where they live before deploying.

"One year out and five years back," that is the plan for the Army National Guard Soldiers once the Army completes its transformation, Pace said.

"It shows the importance of what were doing here for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to come all this way to visit us here," Brig. Gen. Darren Owens, commanding general, MNTF(E), said, after Pace's five hour stopover to Kosovo. "It shows the troops are making a difference."

After the Q&A with the troops, Pace shook hands with and passed out coins to seemingly every single Soldier in attendance. Some Soldiers snapped pictures and others just looked on the surreal scene in awe.

"I thought it was pretty interesting to meet somebody that high in rank," Spc. Christopher Dixon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force Alamo, said.

After Pace's Kosovo visit, he was scheduled to travel to the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Brussels, Belgium.



Nov. 11.

Nov. 11.

Nov. 11.

U.S. Soldiers from Multi-National Task Force (East) received Kosovo Campaign Medals and NATO Non Article 5 medals during the final deployment ceremony Nov. 11 on Camp Bondsteel's Victory Field. KFOR 7 is rotating out of Kosovo after a year long deployment replaced by KFOR8 Soldiers.

Assistant Secretary of the Army Hon. Claude M. Bolton Jr., Acquisition, Logistics and Technology, answered more than a few questions from Q&A, during his visit to Camp Bondsteel on Aug. 26, about why he visited Kosovo, the Future Combat System and ACUs among other things Army

“Beans and Bullets”

Questions, Interview, Layout and Design by Sgt. Matthew Chlosta

Q: What does Army Materiel Command do? What is your job, what do you do and how did you obtain this position?

A: We do all the logistics, provide all the repair, do all the depots for all the systems, weapons systems that we have in the Army and so forth. It is a four-star equivalent position, but it's by political appointment. My job is to head up all of the acquisition work force, provide the policy for logistics and also advise the secretary (of the Army) on scientific matters. Our main function for what I do is coordinate all the acquisition for new programs, things like Stryker; the helicopter modernization program that we're going through right now; the Future Combat System; things that are in the field



right now, like FBCB2 (Force XXI Battle Command, Brigade and Below), all those programs and records come through me for approval.



Q: Do you think there is going to be a replacement for the M-16 anytime soon?

A: The sixteen, I know the school is working on the requirement. There's a general requirement that's been out for a number of years, now it's a matter of going back and seeing well do I want a weapon? Do I want a family of weapons? Which means, it's basically one base weapon that you can modify and get a family of weapons out of it and then how soon you want it and so forth. Basically, I took the technology and put it back in the laboratories until we as an Army corporately decide what we want to do. So, right now the

technology that were developing and could've fielded will mature a bit more in the laboratories. That will give us another year or two to work on that part.

Q: Do you have anything to do with RFI (Rapid Fielding Initiative) issue?

A: The one star (general) who does that works for me. Those are all acquisitions. So, anything that's an acquisition comes through me as a formal program. There is a PM (program manager) who's responsible for ACUs (Army Combat Uniforms) and everything associated with that. There's a PM that's responsible for the guns, light guns, sights, helmets, things like that.

Q: Is there anything new and exciting that's coming up that Soldiers should look forward to in the future?

A: Well you're doing it. I think if you go back and see where we were in say the year two-thousand or even two-thousand one, in terms of let's take your ACU, you didn't have an ACU. You didn't have any of the RFI. There was several thousand dollars spent per Soldier. We have outfitted I think somewhere in the neighborhood of six or seven hundred thousand, it may be a bit more than that. We started that in two-thousand two. To do it through the normal system it would've taken us twenty years to outfit the Army.



Q: In terms of the RFI issue would you call that a success?

A: Oh yes, absolutely, absolutely and not only that, everything that we've talked about, the Blue Force tracker, we talked about the FBCB2, we talked about the JNN, the joint network node, all the uniform things, kneepads, arm pads, shoulder pads, shields, and all of that. The 172nd Stryker Brigade, from Fairbanks, Alaska, Fort Wainwright, the entire brigade went from an idea in nineteen-ninety nine, a vision of our former Chief of Staff, General Eric Shinseki, to a fielded, deployed in combat, brigade, in four years. That included not only building the Stryker



vehicles but all the other parts of the brigade, all the training and so forth, everything in the field. Just to build the vehicle normally takes ten to fifteen years, we did everything in four years. And the reason that brigade stayed over there (in Iraq) is because the Stryker Brigade has just been absolutely unbelievable in its performance. It covers an area that normally a division would cover. And it's because we built that basically from the ground up as a network centric type of vehicle. We trained the Soldiers differently. They use that information to understand where they are, where the enemy is and then with the speed and maneuver and the connectivity execute missions

very, very well. So, that's an example of the Future Combat System, FCS. Now, the neat thing about the FCS program if you've ever read accounts of the Stryker Brigade and about the Army of the future, a decade and a half to two decades from now the Army will be fully populated with this FCS, I equate to the Stryker Brigade on steroids times a thousand. The Army will be just unbelievably awesome in its viability, reality, its situational awareness, connectivity, not only with itself but also (with) the joint force and coalition. That program is the most complicated, most complex, most integrated, that the Department of Defense has ever done, let alone the Army. And, we've been at it now almost forty months, we are below cost and when I checked last week, we were a day and a half behind on the schedule. Nobody has ever been that close, that's near perfect.



Q: Have you put in modifications to the FBCB2 since the original?

A: It's been upgraded every year.

Q: Do you get feedback from people in the field?

A: I have program managers, who are in the field right now and have been ever since we put it in the field. So they get feedback on a daily basis, and with every new rotation that deploys, there is probably an upgrade to the J&M, FBCB2 and a whole host of other systems.

Q: Isn't there supposed to be a new vehicle as part of the FCS?

A: Oh, they'll be several vehicles. The biggest problem that the program has is that since it is so totally integrated that most of the processes that we have in the Pentagon look at the individual parts of a program, not an integrated system of vehicles and Soldiers. So we spent probably half our time just educating the rest of the building and our colleagues over on Capitol Hill about what this is all about. It's an awesome program, we demonstrated the non-line of sight cannon, which people told us we couldn't do, (and) unmanned ground vehicles. We had one demonstration, where we had a lead vehicle and one following right behind unmanned, and then the larger robots.

Q: I also read an article recently where they tested new body armor, new coolant systems and stuff like that?

A: (Yes), in fact those are already in the field, cooling vests.

Q: Is it stronger armor or is it the same armor or a little bit different?

A: Well, I don't know what you've read. We have the enhanced SAPI (Small Arms Protective Inserts), but that's not going to really be ready for about a year. The cooling a lot of folks want that, not only for the body armor but to keep us a little bit cooler and we tie that into a water system.

Q: And will that be put out like RFI was put out, the same type of way?



A: RFI would probably do it. Right now were taking it directly to the field to see how well it works in the AOR (Area of Operation). We were in Kuwait last week and somebody already had two or three of those that they were evaluating.

Q: And, everybody liked them?

A: Yeah. The problem was, one person said it got him too cold. So we want to fine a way to adjust the amount of water that we're putting into these things.

Q: In terms of the RFI, that's one thing I was confused about though. When I first got my RFI issue, in terms of you're saying it takes ten to twenty years to get some other stuff done (procured and out to the field). How is it you are able to do the RFI (so quickly)?

A: Well there's a basic difference between the normal system and where we are right now. It happens in every war, with variety. You can go back for this country to the Revolutionary War and you can find the same thing. The normal system says I write a requirement, then I resource it, then I find a program manager and the technology's at a certain level and you press on. The requirements process is a year long. The resourcing process is two years long as you go through Congress and get money for it and then the technologies take as long as they take. Well, gee, I've just put together a timeline that pretty much takes care of this whole war and you haven't even done anything yet. When you're at war you want it a lot faster. What most folks don't realize is that the requirement (for an RFI item) comes straight from the field and it doesn't take a year, it takes about forty-eight hours. I get operational needs (that can at times be) critical (from the field very quickly). So, it's literally coming from the commander validated by the field commander. It comes directly to the service. In our case the Army, it is vetted by the Army. It doesn't go any place else. So I have got a requirement (in) forty-eight hours not a year. (For) resources, I have supplemental dollars. I don't do a two year cycle, but money is already there and the technology has to be ready today. I can't develop it, because the Soldier needs it like yesterday. So, it's basically out of the labs or off the shelf. There is no development going on. With the FCS that I just talked about, there is a very formal process for the requirement that took a couple years. Budgeting took at least two years. The technology when we started this was not off the shelf. The technology had to be developed. So that's the difference. So, folks say, 'Why don't you do it that way? Why don't you do it the fast way?' Even with the FCS, if I could go down and buy the technology off the shelf right away I would do it that way. You've got to develop it. You've got to put the software together, that didn't exist, I can't go buy that. The robots, just to get them to follow each other and do all that, you know, that's not off the shelf, you can't go buy that stuff. The self protection that were developing for these vehicles, doesn't exist. I mean it did not exist two years ago. So you can't buy it off the shelf and that's the thing that a lot of folks forget and the other thing is, which I consider equally as important. If I give you technology all the time off the shelf, particularly in the type of war we're in now, guess who else gets the technology.

Q: The enemy?

A: Right and the reason we keep updating FBCB2 and body armor and what were doing in the IED (improvised explosive device) arena constantly is because the enemy has the same technology. What were trying to do with things like the FCS, like WIN-T (which is our tactical network), or the joint tactical radio, is really to develop the technology that nobody else is doing and field it and have some gap in there before the enemy actually catches up, and during that time we can work on the upgrades. So, I've not been able to figure out how to

take a program that's technically challenging, where you are actually developing the technology and it's not off the shelf, how to do that as fast as what were doing today (in RFI) where the technology is available.

Q: But are you hoping with the FCS that the gap before the enemy catches up will be five to ten years?

A: I would say at least five years and probably more. You see an inkling of this right now with the Stryker. The enemy does not seem to be able to catch up with the fact I've networked everybody. He can throw RPGs (Rocket Propelled Grenades), he can throw IEDs (and) that's had minimal impact on that vehicle. So, I'm confident that everything we're doing on the FCS, and by the way we are taking every lesson we can from the Stryker from whatever's going on in the field and putting it into the design of this thing. But, we'll have something that will be very hard to defeat.

Q: Do you think eventually we'll go away, from Bradley Fighting Vehicles and Abrams tanks to just Strykers?

A: Yes, we will eventually. I mean the Bradley was part of the big five back in the eighties, thought about in the seventies, developed in the eighties, you're talking about a twenty to twenty five-year-old vehicle. And, I know there are folks, particularly my colleagues in the armor area (who) would like to see it forever. So, their looking at twenty-thirty (2030). Well now you're talking about a design that's basically fifty-years-old. I don't think we can do that. Because the only way you can protect it, is to make it heavier and it's already pretty heavy. So, no, they'll eventually go away, but they will not go away until we've convinced ourselves and the Soldier's convinced that the vehicles that we're building, that will be lighter weight, are at least as survivable and (in) all likely hood more so than Abrams or Bradleys are today.

Q: What is your typical day like?

A: My typical day starts around five o'clock in the morning. I'm in the office somewhere around six, at the

Pentagon. I try to run everyday, I'm a marathoner, so typically for an hour or so I do a 10k a day. The standard office hours are eight to five, but I'll start before then and we typically close up the office around seven-thirty in the evening. And that's for the normal business day in the Pentagon. Since, we are obviously fighting a war folks are basically working twenty-four/seven in the Army operations center and elsewhere throughout AMC.

Q: Are you married and how many kids do you have?

A: I've been married just over thirty-eight years as of April. We have two daughters, both are grown. (He became a grandfather fifteen days before the interview).

Q: Do you enjoy/love what you do?

A: I do. I was asked to come here by the President. I was on active duty as a flag officer for the Air Force. I consider it an honor and a pleasure to serve the country in this position and also serve the President. We literally retired New Year's Eve two-thousand one and drove to Washington (D.C.) on the first and got sworn in on the second.

Q: What's the difference between what you did in your military background compared to what you do now?

A: Well, I started out as an operational fighter pilot, test pilot, combat pilot flying in Vietnam. (Bolton Jr. flew 232 combat missions during the Vietnam War). (After Vietnam I flew) as a test pilot for about four or five years and that really got me into what we call acquisition. Then I became a program manager for several programs



for the Air Force. Their newest fighter the F22A I started that program. Also, I was responsible for getting the first B-2 Stealth Bomber flying. Then, I led a school that actually taught all of the Department of Defense program managers. My last position (before my current one) was to do foreign military security systems with about eighty countries. So I spent two weeks every year visiting two or three of those countries. In fact I was in Tokyo, when I got a call from the White House to retire.

Q: The President appointed you and you had to be

approved by Congress? How did that process go for you?

A: Yes, by the Senate. It went well for me. The President does that for all of his appointments, most of the time you don't see it. He actually does it for all officers, because there's a limit by law as to how many military officers we can have, and for about ten percent of all the political appointees they have to be confirmed by the Senate and in my case by the Senate Armed Services committee, which is chaired by Senator John Warner from Virginia and ranking minority member from Michigan is (Senator) Carl Levin. So it went well, it was about an hour, maybe an hour and a half. You had a chance to sit there with at least those two gentlemen and we had several other senators. They get to grill you for an hour and a half. It went well and I was happy to have my wife and our younger daughter there.

Q: Why are you here to visit Kosovo? Have you been here before, if so when?

A: I'd not been here before. I'd like to see how we were doing because we have people here who are with AMC and how we're supporting the mission here.

Q: Which people here are from the AMC?

A: We have the Army Field Support Brigade, represented by Mr. Tate. I think we have a colonel here as well for the AMC. And their function is to make sure we got the right balance between all those commands we just talked about and all the various systems that you have here.

Q: How has your visit been so far?

A: Great, great, we had a chance to get some excellent briefings today (Aug. 26), an overall tour of the area of responsibility, the SSA (Supply Support Activity) and we looked at some warehouses. We'll continue touring tomorrow morning. We had an excellent evening here with the Commanding General, his staff, some of the contractors, who are here. And, what General Griffin loves to do (Gen. Benjamin Griffin, commanding general, AMC, who was also visiting Kosovo with Bolton Jr.), he will go around the table and ask for one concern from each person. And, it's not pointing fingers or anything like that. He and I really want to understand what can we do to make your job better and so we just like to have one comment from each person. That typically takes about an hour.

Q: Out of all the comments you received today, what are one or two that stand out to you?

A: We'll some things that will I think help the next unit (KFOR8) rotating in.

Editors Note: The Q&A with Hon. Claude Bolton Jr.-interview took place at 8:30 p.m. on Aug. 26 in the North Town Dining Facility. This Q&A has been heavily copy-edited for space and clarity with some questions reordered by topic. View the entire interview word for word at www.tffalcon.hqusareur.army.mil. All quotes attributed to Bolton Jr. are indirect.



One

Story, Photo, Layout and Design by Sgt. Matthew Chlosta

A single KFOR Task Force is one future possibility after Kosovo's final status determination

A brutal war was fought from 1995-1999 between Serbians and Kosovo-Albanians. After a 77-day North Atlantic Treaty Organization bombing campaign against the Serbian Army ended the fighting, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 established Kosovo as a U.N. protected and administered province. The U.N. mandate set up a NATO peacekeeping mission called Kosovo Force.

What will Kosovo look like 10 years from now? The answer will be partially based on what happens in the final status process for Kosovo. The final status is projected to be determined by the United Nations Security Council early next year after Serbia's parliamentary elections. And after Kosovo's final status is determined, what would the future Kosovo Force look like? There are many possibilities, but one plan stands out as the most logical future based on recent KFOR reassignments and consolidations.

Realigning KFOR from Multi-National Brigades to Multi-National Task Forces in August of this year consolidated the remaining NATO peacekeepers into regional task forces called, MNTFs (East), (Center), (South), (West), (North). This could be seen as a possible small first step in the future of KFOR.

One possible scenario, contingent on the security situation and Kosovo's final status, could have KFOR become one centralized MNTF. That MNTF would be headquartered in Prishtine/Pristina's Film City, with a smaller contingent of peacekeepers on hand to surge to a trouble spot in any region of Kosovo if one flares up in the future.

"Our mission in Kosovo is dictated by United Nations Security Council Resolution (1244 created in June 1999), to maintain a safe and secure environment," Lt. Col. Joachim Strenk, operations officer, G-3, Cedar Park, Texas, said. "For the mission in Kosovo to change, that mission has to be updated or superseded by another U.N. resolution.

"KFOR has maintained a safe and secure environment and will continue to do so until and after a final status has been achieved," Strenk said. "The ultimate goal of KFOR is to provide a safe and secure environment, for the civil institutions to grow and mature."

But, all of this leads another question. How many NATO peace-

"KFOR has maintained a safe and secure environment until and after a final status has been achieved," Lt. Col. Joachim Strenk said.

keepers are needed to keep Kosovo secure after the final status decision?

"Success in this mission is defined by working yourself out of a job," Strenk said. "In 1999 there were forty-thousand international Soldiers in Kosovo and today there (are) only seventeen-thousand. These numbers are always dependent on what the Commander of KFOR needs. The hope is that this number will be ultimately further reduced to someday be zero."

Would the future KFOR MNTF have American Soldiers?

"There is a commitment of U.S. Soldiers to the mission here in Kosovo. There always has been and always will be (as long as) needed in the future," Strenk said.





From left to right, Cpl. Mantas Gudelis, Lithuanian Army, Vilnius, Lithuania, Spc. Jason McIntosh, 3rd Squad, 2nd Platoon, Company A, Task Force Alamo, 36th Infantry Division, Texas National Guard, Round Rock, Texas, Pvt. Witold Wojciechowski, Polish Army, Pizcmizl, Poland and Master Sgt. Dmytro Kopach, Ukrainian Army, Novograd-Volinsk, Ukraine, all Soldiers in Multi-National Task Force (East) stand ready to maintain a safe and secure environment in Kosovo on Nov. 8 at Camp Bondsteel. International Soldiers from Greece and Armenia also serve with MNTF(E), while Sweden has a small unit of Soldiers based at CBS.

The recent downsizing of Camp Monteith in MNTF(E) and the reopening of Camp Nothing Hill in MNTF(N) has allowed KFOR the flexibility to continue the mission of a safe and secure environment in Kosovo, but also plan for the future, reduce costs and increase efficiencies throughout KFOR, according to Strenk.

"The closing of Camp Monteith and the consolidation of other camps has allowed troop contributing nations to achieve significant cost savings," Strenk said. "It is also a great sign of how far Kosovo has matured over the past years and the great political progress that has been made here.

"Camp Nothing Hill's reopening is to demonstrate to -- Kosovo -

**ment and will continue to do so until and after
n Strenk, operations officer, G-3, MNTF(E).**

- the KFOR commitment to a safe and secure environment throughout Kosovo," Strenk said. "There has been a reduction of troops over the years, which is positive, but the mission hasn't changed."

Whether or not KFOR becomes one task force, the joint missions and operations between the NATO peacekeepers are going to continue and will play an even greater role in KFOR's future.

"Our relations with partner nations will impact their nations as well." Brig. Gen. Darren Owens, commanding general, Multi-National Task Force (East), said. "For example, communications, interoperability with multinational forces and teaching our methods for things like air ground integration, crowd and riot control. We have POL/UKR (Soldiers) controlling U.S. aircraft."

As the year draws to a close, Kosovo's final status is being decided by the U.N., and the one year deployment for the U.S. KFOR7 Soldiers is coming to an end.

The American's KFOR8 rotation has arrived and brought with them almost the same number of U.S. Soldiers as KFOR7. The U.S. KFOR8 rotation isn't changing in the number of peacekeepers but will increase some type of missions previous rotations have performed in smaller numbers. One example is the Liaison & Monitoring Teams, who go out into the local communities daily to find out what the current concerns of local Kosovars are and try to help find solutions to their issues.

There will be even more Liaison Monitoring Teams out and about in the local MNTF(E) community as KFOR8 takes over.

"We've brought a group of people who've seen they can be part of something bigger than themselves and made a difference every-day," Owens said.

"This job is important to our future, our children's future and our grandchildren's future," Owens said. "Our success has been in the work we've done, but also in how well we've prepared KFOR8. We've worked to help KFOR8 sustain our achievements and take it to the next level. We want them to push it up a notch, and succeed even better than we have."

We don't know what the future hold, Owens said. But, "We do know what KFOR8 looks like. After that, (it) depends upon the situation in Kosovo and on political decisions. "Our unit's impact will go beyond us and Kosovo," Owens said.



The Moon & The Sunset

Mount Ljuboten -- "Big Duke"
Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, Oct. 27
Photo by Sgt. Matthew Chlosta



MNTF (E) at work...continued



Top left: Sgt. Ryan Cornelius, crew chief, Co. C, TF Talon, Abilene, Kan., prepares to unload a simulated casualty from a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter May 8 during their portion of Operation New Frontier.

Above: Staff Sgt. Kelly Meyers, a TF Talon flight medic, Garnett, Kan., walks to his UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter in response to an emergency call for air medical evacuation during a training exercise May 8. The exercise, which was part of Operation New Frontier, involved TF MedFalcon providing air medical evacuation assistance out of their normal area of responsibility.

Left: Staff Sgt. Shirley Lovett (left), TF MedFalcon, Texarkana, Texas, and Sgt. 1st Class Javier Adlay, TF MedFalcon, Washington, D.C., conduct equipment inventories and prepare redeployment paperwork at the Camp Bondsteel hospital's emergency room desk Nov. 11.

Guardian Special Edition

is produced for personnel of KFOR7 Multi-National Task Force (East)

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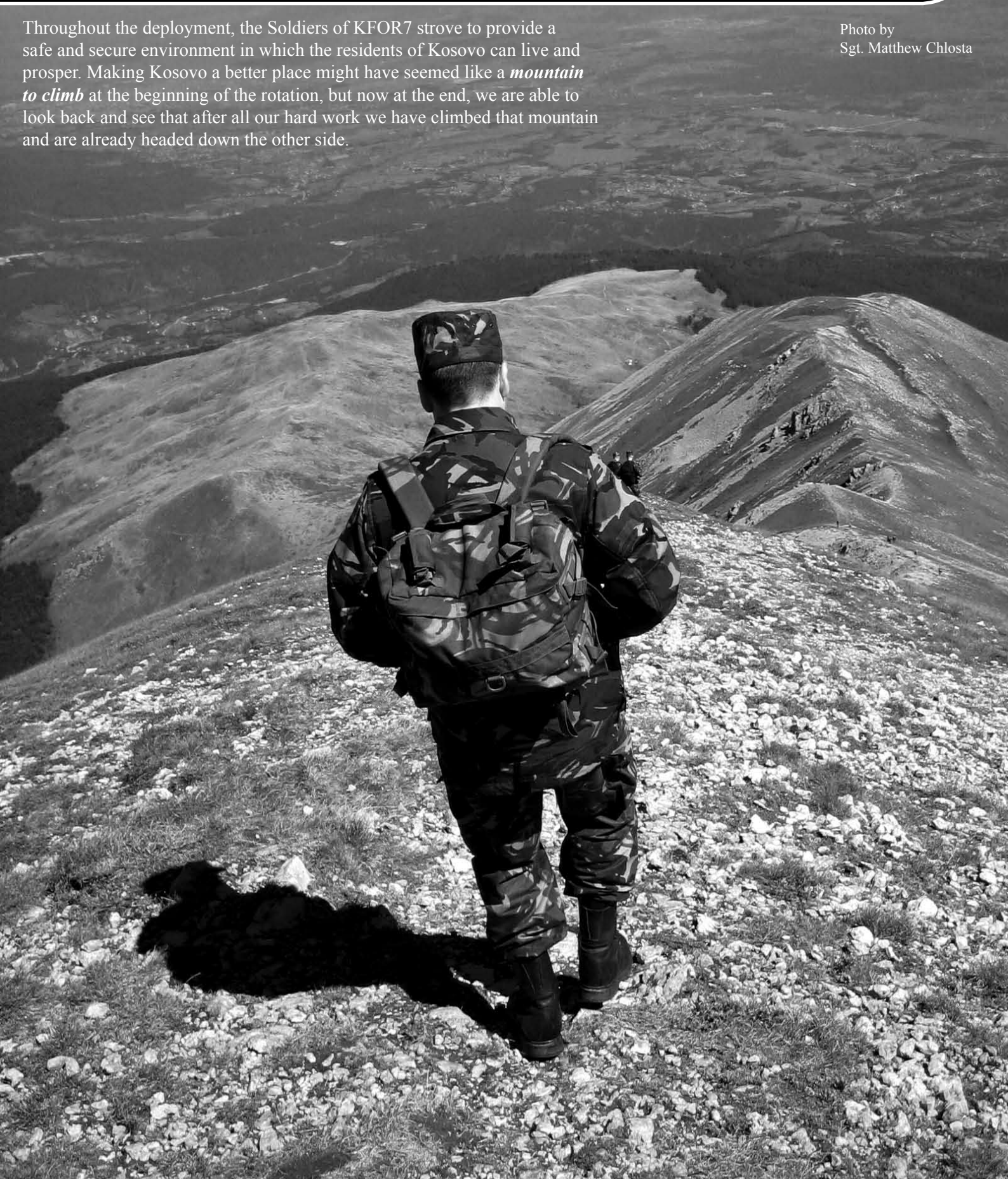
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Closing shot

Throughout the deployment, the Soldiers of KFOR7 strove to provide a safe and secure environment in which the residents of Kosovo can live and prosper. Making Kosovo a better place might have seemed like a *mountain to climb* at the beginning of the rotation, but now at the end, we are able to look back and see that after all our hard work we have climbed that mountain and are already headed down the other side.

Photo by
Sgt. Matthew Chlosta



Photos from some of our UPARS (Unit Public Affairs Representatives)

Photo by

Spc. Gene DuBielak
TF Alamo



Spc. Johny Ramirez III, Co. B, TF Houston, fires his 12-gauge shotgun at the Task Force Houston familiarization range, conducted Apr. 27 at Falcon 4. The range was run by the TF Houston engineering platoon.

Photo by

Sgt. Mario Perez
TF Alamo



Staff Sgt. John Kaling, Company C, Task Force Alamo, looks out over the Kosovo countryside from an elevated view on a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter during his ride to Falcon 4 Range for participation in a live-fire exercise Sept. 30.

Throughout the rotation, the journalists of the Guardian staff relied on timely and accurate reporting from our task force unit public affairs representatives to ensure that as many KFOR7 units as possible received coverage from the Guardian. Our UPAR program was critical to the success of our mission. Here are their favorite photos from the deployment.

Photo by

Sgt. William Smith
TF Falcon



Sgt. Charles Boxley, dismount squad leader, Co. D, Task Force Houston, Huffman, Texas, makes his way back down “Big Duke” after climbing to the peak during one of KFOR 7’s “Big Duke Challenge” trips.

Photo by

Spc. Michael O’Neal
TF Alamo



Local Kosovar children have fun with Task Force Alamo Soldiers while they pose for a photo in front of a vehicle in the Viti/Vitina area Feb. 21.

The people of Kosovo



Photo by
Staff Sgt. Brandon Krahmer

Above: A Serbian woman plans her purchases at the Shterpce/Strpce market Feb. 16.

Below: A group of schoolchildren wave for the photographer after Headquarters and Headquarters Company, TF Falcon, visited their school and donated school supplies and other items. Many KFOR 7 units adopted local schools or orphanages as a way to volunteer and to reach out to members of the local community.



Photo courtesy of TF Falcon

Kosovars express condolences for former Kosovo President Ibrahim Rugova



Local townsmen pay their respects at a memorial for former Kosovo President Ibrahim Rugova at 11:30 a.m. on Jan. 23 at the Viti/Vitina municipal building.



Photo by
Sgt. Pedro Martiz, TF Alamo



"He never gave up, and he dedicated his life to our people. He did everything peacefully." - Anisa Zubaku, resident of Kosovo

Photo by
Spc. Gene DuBielak, TF Houston



Staff Sgt. Santiago Munoz Jr., Headquarters and Headquarters Company, TF Houston, information operations, reviews photos with a Kosovar child on his digital camera after his unit visited the child's school to donate school supplies.

Photo by
Spc. Gene DuBielak, TF Houston



Photo by
Maj. Paul Pecena



Center: A horse drawn-buggy moves down a dirt road that runs through range Falcon 4. When Soldiers of KFOR 7 are using Falcon 4, they set aside certain times of the day to allow locals access to the road.

Left: Local children look on as KFOR7 Soldiers wait for Brig. Gen. Darren Owens, commander, MNTF(E), to return to an awaiting aircraft from his visit to Babush i Serbeve/Srp-ski Babus on Sept. 7.

Multi-National Partners



Photo by
Staff Sgt. Brandon Krahmer

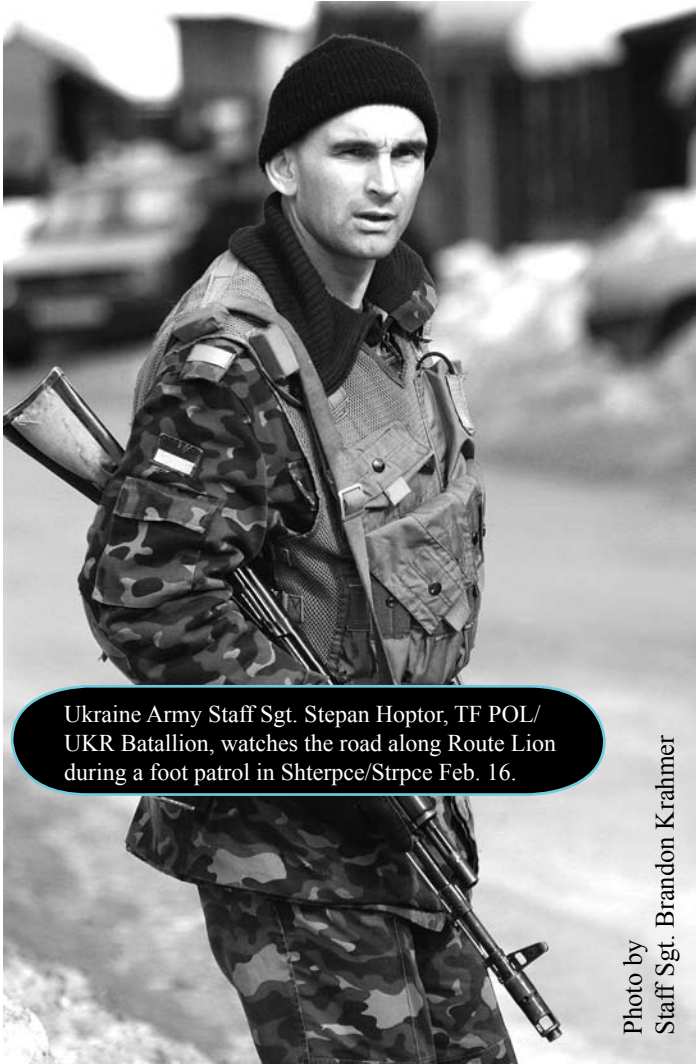
A Czech Soldier of Multi-National Task Force (North) prepares to don his facemask during an emergency response exercise held in the MNTF (E) area of responsibility Jan. 22.

Whether it was during day-to-day operations, range qualifications, or large-scale in and out-of-sector operations, the multinational partners of MNTF(E): Polish, Ukrainian, Hellas, Lithuanian and Armenian Soldiers were an intergral part of our success during the KFOR7 deployment to Kosovo.



Photo by
Staff Sgt. Brandon Krahmer,

A Ukranian Soldier (left) of the TF POL/UKR Bat. watches a MNTF(E) Soldier demonstrate the disassembly of an M-16 rifle during a joint weapons qualification at Range 7 in Ferizaj/Urosevac May 13.



Ukraine Army Staff Sgt. Stepan Hoptor, TF POL/UKR Battalion, watches the road along Route Lion during a foot patrol in Shterpce/Strpce Feb. 16.

Photo by
Staff Sgt. Brandon Krahmer



Photo by
Sgt. Matthew Chlosta

Polish Army Sgt. Edward Roguz, POL/UKR Bat. hands out bottles of water and other goodies during a Medical Civil Assistance Program at the Keshtjella e Diturise school in PaldenicePalivodenica Feb. 18.



Photo by
Staff Sgt. Brandon Krahmer

A TF Hellas Soldier talks with locals in during the St. Uros church clean up, held in Ferizaj/Urosevac Sept. 9.

MNTF(E) at work...continued



Photo by
Staff Sgt. Brandon Krahmer



Photo by
Staff Sgt. Brandon Krahmer



Photo by
Staff Sgt. Brandon Krahmer



Photo by
Spc. Gene DuBielak, TF Houston

Top left: Capt. Jon Breakey (Left), a TF MedFalcon physical therapist from Hampstead, Md. , works on stretching and rotational exercises during a physical therapy session with Staff Sgt. Gary Nolte, Co. A, TF Houston, New Braunfels, Texas, Nov. 17.

Top right: Sgt. Summer Sampson, Personnel Services Center, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, TF Falcon, Houston, Texas, talks with coworkers during duty hours Nov. 11. Sampson handled enlisted promotions and orders for the entire task force, to include two regular Army detachments, during the rotation.

Above: Task Force Alamo Soldiers unload food and supplies from a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter during Operation New Frontier May 9. Operation New Frontier was a multi-national cross-boundary exercise, in which MNTF (E) troops performed patrols, checkpoints, and various other tasks in the MNTF (N) area of responsibility.

Left: Spc. John Cardenas, Co. B, TF Houston, San Antonio, Texas, aims his 12-gauge shotgun, loaded with non-lethal ammunition, during non-lethal weapons training on range Falcon 4 Feb. 3.



Sgt. Robert Martin(left), Co. C, TF Alamo, Waxahachie, Texas, and nd Lt. Michael Moussa, Co. A, TF Alamo, Dallas, Texas, communicate with their Soldiers on the ground and in the air during a live-fire exercise held at Falcon 4, outside of Ramjan/Donje Ramnjame, Aug. 11.

MNTF (E) at work



Photo courtesy of TF Alamo

Above: Spc. Kevin Westland 2nd Plt., Co. A, TF Alamo, grabs an afternoon meal while camped out on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia border. During the mission, named “Operation Yellow Rose”, the Soldiers of TF Alamo caught individuals trying to smuggle more than 300,000 euro worth of coffee, candles and other goods across the border into Kosovo.

Right: 1st Lt. Richard Nazareno, HHC, TF Houston, communications section, a Las Vegas, Nev., native, fires the MG-35 during Schutzenshnr qualification in Prizren/Prizren Sept. 8. During the rotation, many KFOR 7 Soldiers were afforded the opportunity to qualify on several German weapons, including the pistol, rifle, and heavy machine gun. The badge can be worn on the Class A uniform as a foreign weapon qualification.

Photo by
Spc. Michael O’Neal, TF Alamo



Photo by
Spc. Michael O'Neal, TF Alamo



A Task Force Talon UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter flies over the Kosovo countryside on its way back from Balkan Hawk IV on April 26. Balkan Hawk IV was a multi-national exercise designed to increase KFOR's ability to react to possible civil disturbances.



Photo by Sgt. Matthew Chlosta

Transfer of Authority

Left: Capt. Stephen Shaffer, commander, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, TF Falcon, marches his unit out of the clam-shell after the transfer of authority ceremony Jan. 11. Below: Lt. Col. Charles Aris (left), commander, TF Houston, salutes during the pass and review of Lt. Gen. Guiseppe Valotto, commander of KFOR, near the end of the ceremony Jan. 11.

Under a cold, blue sky, protected and warm inside a giant “clam shell” bubble dome, Soldiers from the 36th Infantry Division, Texas National Guard, in their division’s first deployment to Europe since World War II, took command of Kosovo Force Multi-National Brigade (East) at 10 a.m. in a transfer of authority ceremony, here.

Out going MNB(E) Commander Brig. Gen. John Harrel, 40th Infantry Division, California National Guard handed authority over to incoming Commander Brig. Gen. Darren Owens, commanding general, Task Force Falcon, 36th Inf. Div., and MNB(E).

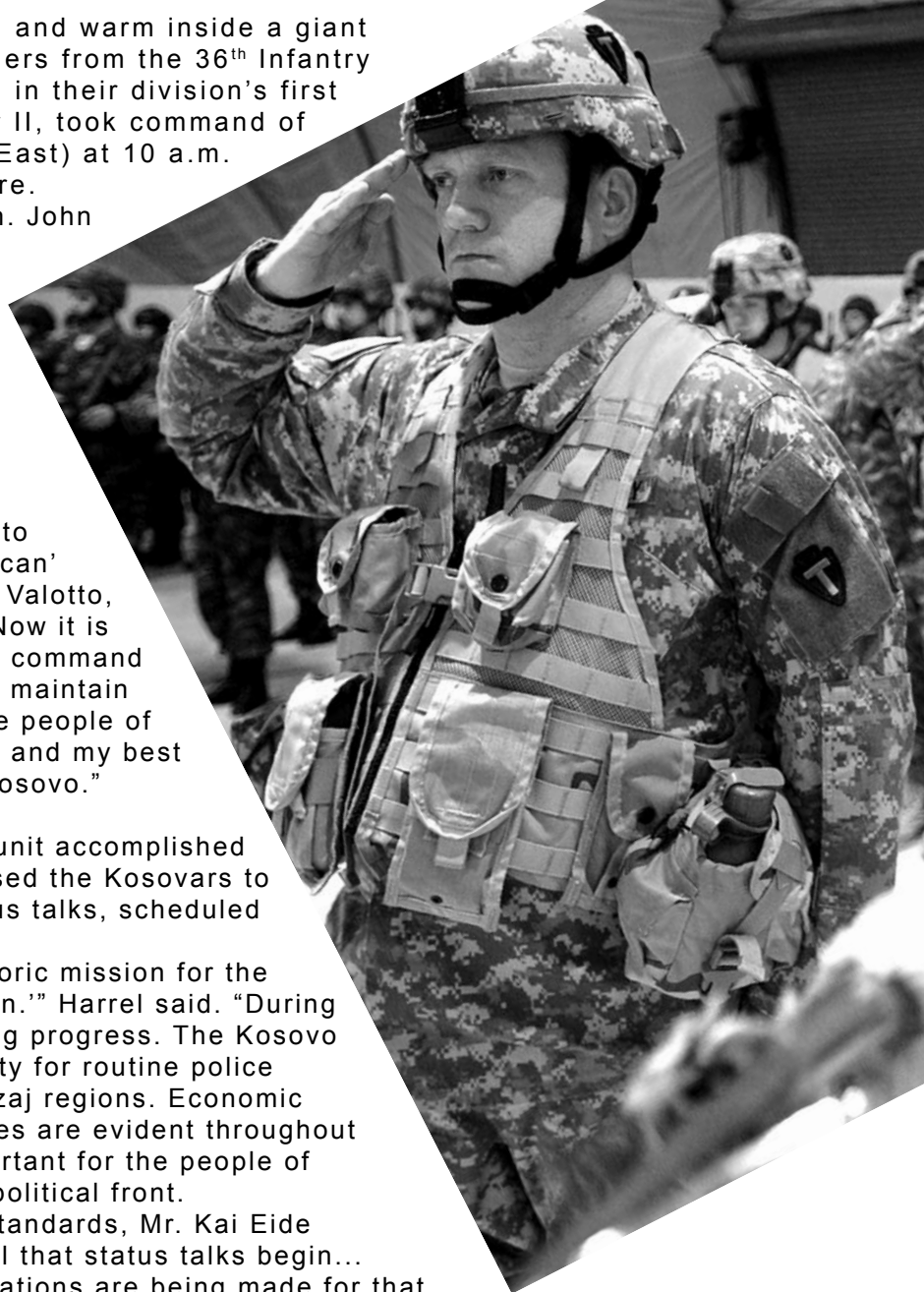
“You were active in promoting my policy of support to UNMIK and the provisional institutions of self-government, thus contributing to back up my action aimed to show that, here in Kosovo, ‘together we can’ make the difference,” Lt. Gen. Giuseppe Valotto, commander, KFOR, Italian Army, said. “Now it is up to -- General Owens, to take over the command and to lead the brigade in its mission, to maintain a safe and secure environment for all the people of Kosovo. I thank you for your work, John, and my best wishes to you, Darren, for your tour in Kosovo.”

Harrel stepped up to the podium next.

He talked about missions and goals his unit accomplished during their time in MNB(E) and he advised the Kosovars to keep looking forward to their future status talks, scheduled to begin this year.

“Today marks the official end of this historic mission for the ‘Peacemakers of the 40th Infantry Division.’” Harrel said. “During our time here we have witnessed amazing progress. The Kosovo Police Service has assumed responsibility for routine police functions throughout the Gjilan and Ferizaj regions. Economic expansion and new business opportunities are evident throughout our area of responsibility. But most important for the people of Kosovo, progress is being made on the political front.

“Following a comprehensive review of standards, Mr. Kai Eide recommended to the UN Security Council that status talks begin... and as we stand here today, final preparations are being made for that process to get underway.” Harrel continued. “Leaders at every level must do their part to guide the process and to resist participation in unhelpful activities.”



KFOR7 assumed responsibility for the Multi-National Task Force (East) area of responsibility during their transfer of authority ceremony, held on Camp Bondsteel on Jan. 11.

Editor's Note: Story, by Sgt. Matthew Chlosta, originally published in Edition 13-1 of the Guardian magazine

Photo by Staff Sgt. Brandon Krahmer



Troops from the "Lone Star" Division watched as Owens and Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Boyer, 36th Inf. Div., command sergeant major, MNB(E), uncased the 36th Inf. Div. colors on European soil for the first time since the "Fight'n 36th" took part in the invasion of Italy during WW II in 1943.

Harrel finished his comments with reflection on the past rotation and for the future of Kosovo Forces and local citizens.

"We leave here with fond memories, positive experiences and above all-a belief that Kosovo's future will be bright and prosperous. Maintaining peace in the Balkans is truly a noble cause -- a great endeavor-worthy of the sacrifices we have made to be part of this mission. While the duties of peacekeeping fall on Soldiers, it cannot succeed without the support and cooperation of the people. Keeping the peace is everyone's responsibility."

Harrel said, during his remarks to the KFOR Soldiers standing in crisp formations, the audience and several distinguished visitors.

One of those DVs was Lt. Gen.

Ricardo Sanchez, commanding general, V Corps and deputy commanding general, 7th Army and United States Army

Europe. Sanchez had been commanding general of an earlier KFOR rotation several years ago, when he was still a brigadier general.

"Let me say 'thank you' to

General Harrel and the Soldiers of his command for the fine job they have done as peacekeepers for the last year here in Kosovo," Owens said, after Harrel finished his remarks.

"As Texans, you will see that we are a friendly people," Owens said. "But behind that friendly smile you will find that Texans are a tough people. The good folks here will find that we are good neighbors. The bad folks will find that we will be hard, and relentless in the pursuit of peace, justice, and the rule of law. We are here on a noble mission: to help make Kosovo a peaceful and safe place."

"Our Soldiers patrol on foot, to get to know the local folks. We will continue working with the KPS and the civil authorities in Kosovo," Owens said.

"I promise you this," Owens said emphatically as he closed his speech. "We will not take sides. We will support the political process to determine the future status of Kosovo. We will do our part, working hand in hand with the police, and civil authorities to make this a place where decent folks can live without fear. So now is the time and now is the hour for all of us to re-dedicate ourselves to the hard work of peace, and let no one stand in the way."

"As Texans, you will see that we are a friendly people. But behind that friendly smile you will find that Texans are a tough people. The good folks here will find that we are good neighbors. The bad folks will find that we will be hard and relentless in the pursuit of peace, justice, and the rule of law. We are here on a noble mission: to help make Kosovo a peaceful and safe place."

-Brig. Gen. Darren Owens

The road to Kosovo

Spc. Allen Clark, dismount, Company D, TF Houston, pours out of a Bradley Fighting Vehicle on Aug. 6, 2005, as his unit practices dismount procedures at the Crittenger Multi-Purpose Range Complex on Fort Hood, Texas in preparation for deployment to Kosovo.



Photo by
Sgt. Matthew Chlosta

The U.S. Army units of KFOR7 trained at various locations in the states, with the majority of training conducted at Fort Hood, Texas. A final Mission Readiness Exercise was conducted in Hohenfels, Germany, before finally shipping out of Kosovo. Training began at the individual task level, and progressed to large-scale exercises that would prepare the Soldiers of KFOR7 for their mission in Kosovo.



Photo by
Spc. J. Tashun Joyce



Photo by
Spc. Daniel J. Nichols

Above: Soldiers of KFOR 7 participate in the live-fire portion of the "shoot house" on Aug. 10, 2005 at North Fort Hood during mobilization training.

Left: Sgt. Glen Woodruff, TF Viper, examines a recently-inserted I.V. fluid catheter during a Combat Lifesaver School at North Fort Hood during mobilization training July 29, 2005.

Below: Soldiers enter a room during a cordon and search mission conducted during the Mission Readiness Exercise at Hohenfels, Germany, Dec. 4, 2005.

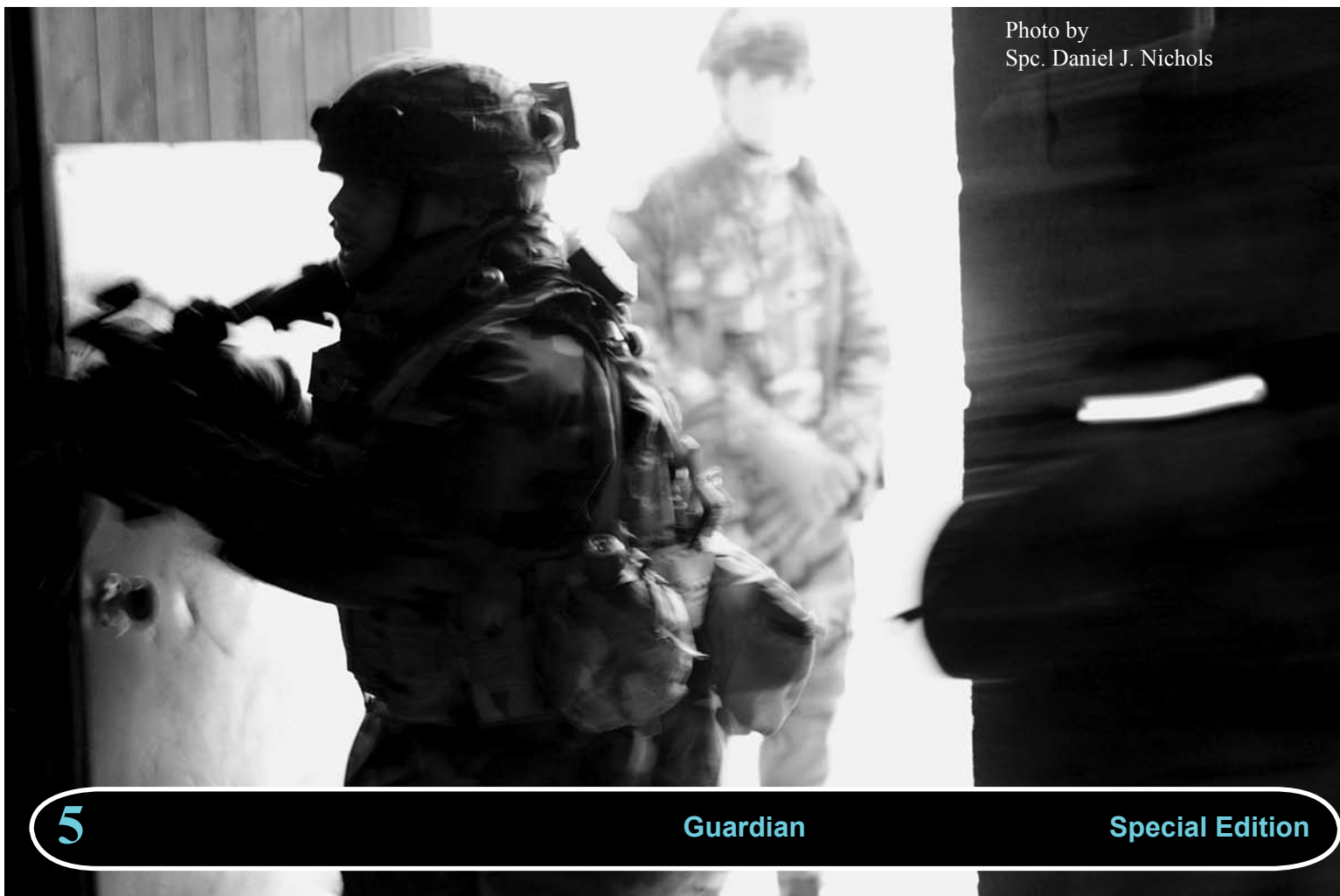


Photo by
Spc. Daniel J. Nichols

Guardian Special Edition: *End of a Journey in photos* Vol. 1, Issue 1 December 2006

The breathtaking view of Mount Lujoboten, affectionately called "Big Duke" makes a great backdrop for group and individual keepsake photos. Spc. David Scott, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, TF Alamo, a San Antonio, Texas, native, posed for a photo by the Task Force Houston motorpool in February.

[Photoillustration by Spc. Michael O'Neal, TF Alamo -- Layout & Design by Staff Sgt. Brandon Krahmer]

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This section of the Guardian Special Edition is dedicated to showcasing some of the key aspects and operations from Kosovo Force's Multi-National Task Force (East)'s KFOR7 rotation. While it would be impossible to showcase everything we did this year on just 20 pages, this section features some of the higher quality images that our 4th PAD photojournalists and task force unit public affairs representatives captured before and during the deployment.



